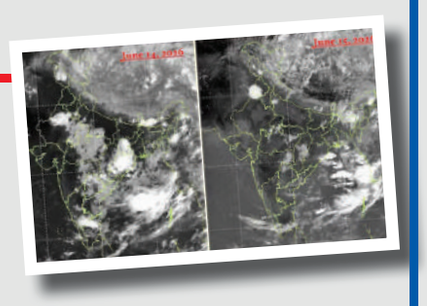
NATION

Alarming satellite pics show monsoon clouds leave India

≫ Page: 4 ≪



BUSINESS

Telegram blames Reliance for ban

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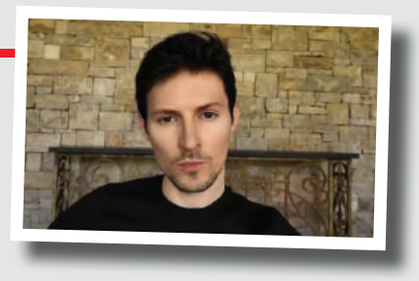

SPORTS

Shafali & Mandhana headline India's win over Netherlands

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B'desh calls BSF killings 'violation of human rights'

DHAKA, 17 JUNE

Bangladesh's Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed on Wednesday told parliament that alleged killings by India's Border Security Force (BSF) along the frontier amount to a "clear violation of human rights".

Ahmed said the issue was raised by the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) during recently concluded director general-level talks with the BSF in New Delhi. "The killing of innocent Bangladeshi nationals by the BSF is a clear violation of human rights," he said, adding that Dhaka has repeatedly protested the use of weapons and sought accountability and compensation.

India and Bangladesh concluded four-day border talks on 11 June, covering issues including alleged assaults on BSF personnel and Indian civilians by Bangladeshi nationals, and breaches of the frontier fence. New Delhi has maintained that such incidents occur in self-defence during cross-border crimes, including smuggling, trafficking and unauthorised entry. The 4,096-km border shared by the two countries runs largely through West Bengal.

Ahmed also criticised India's "push-in" policy, claiming BGB prevented 36 attempted push-ins and that 2,369 people were sent into Bangladesh since August 5, 2024, with most handed to police, some returned to BSF, and others pushed back.

He said cooperation between BSF and BGB had improved through joint patrols and swift flag meetings to defuse tensions. The remarks came two days after Dhaka summoned India's deputy high commissioner. —*PTI*

US ~~Indo~~-Pacific Command

US drops 'Indo'; shows India map excluding Pok, Aksai Chin

WASHINGTON, 17 JUNE

The United States has restored the name of the US Indo-Pacific Command to the US Pacific Command (USPACOM), reversing an eight-year-old decision that had symbolised Washington's growing strategic focus on the Indian Ocean region.

Announcing the move on Tuesday, the US Department of Defence said the restored designation honours the command's "deep historical roots", tracing back to its establishment in 1947 by then-President Harry Truman.

The decision has also drawn attention in India after an "area of responsibility" map on the Pacific Command website depicted an inaccurate picture of India's borders, excluding Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Aksai Chin. The webpage carrying the map states that it was last updated in March.

New Delhi maintains that the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are integral and inalienable parts of India by virtue of the "complete, legal and irrevocable accession" of Jammu and Kashmir to India in 1947.

- Congress criticised the BJP-led government over the map issue. Meanwhile, responding to the announcement, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor wrote on X, "One more nail in the coffin of the Quad?"

The command's area of responsibility remains unchanged, stretching from the US West Coast to India's western border.

The move reverses a symbolic but strategically significant change introduced in 2018, when then US Defence Secretary James Mattis redesignated the command as the US Indo-Pacific Command to reflect the growing strategic importance of the Indian Ocean and its increasing integration with Pacific security dynamics.

The Pentagon said the command's fundamental mission and its commitment to maintaining a free and open theatre alongside regional allies and partners remain unchanged.

The 2018 renaming was widely seen as Washington's acknowledgement that developments in the Indian Ocean and South Asia had become increasingly intertwined with security outcomes in the Pacific. For India, USINDOPACOM became an important institutional channel for expanding defence cooperation through joint exercises, maritime coordination and strategic engagement under the broader Indo-Pacific framework.

"The US Pacific Command ... is back," Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said in a post on X.

Opposition party Congress criticised the BJP-led government over the map issue. Congress leader Pawan Khera alleged that the incorrect depiction undermined India's interests and questioned the government's ties with Washington.

The change comes amid signs that the Trump administration is placing less emphasis on the Indo-Pacific terminology and pursuing greater engagement with China, even as it continues security partnerships across Asia. —*PTI*

'Keep Hormuz open': PM raises safety of seafarers with Trump

EVIAN-LES-BAINS, 17 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday raised the issue of seafarers' safety with US President Donald Trump, urging that their protection be given the highest priority during the implementation of Washington's peace deal with Iran. This was as the two leaders focused on repairing bilateral ties that have seen significant strain over the past year.

The meeting, held during G7 summit in France, came amid growing outrage in India over the killing of three Indian crew members of a merchant vessel in US military strikes.

Trump described India as a trusted partner and said the US would defend it if anyone attacked. "As long as I am at the White House, India has a friend in the US," he said, while also praising Modi as a "tough negotiator" who "loves the Indian people".

Modi complimented Trump for his efforts to end the West Asia conflict and stressed the importance of maritime security. He said the safety of "lakhs of Indian seafarers" working across global shipping routes must be prioritised under any peace arrangement with Iran. "Keeping the Strait of Hormuz open is vital for the global economy," he said, calling for cooperation on freedom of navigation.

When Modi raised concerns over three Indian seafarers killed near Oman, Trump said he was aware of the incident, describing seafaring as a "rough profession".

Trump further expressed optimism about a proposed India-US trade deal and said he would visit India soon. He also described India as a major global player, adding that it would "play a big role" in West Asia.

Trump again reiterated that he had helped end eight wars, including the India-Pakistan military clashes of May 2025, assertions that Indian officials have consistently rejected. Relations between Washington and New Delhi had deteriorated in recent months following US tariff measures and changes in immigration policy, including an increase in H1B visa fees.

Separately at the G7, Trump told a gathering of world leaders and reporters, "I'm the boss" after arrive late to talks on Ukraine and sanctions on Russia. —*PTI*

>>>More on Pages 5 & 6

PM Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump during G7 Summit in France's Evian on Wednesday —*PTI*

Lionel Messi conquered another peak. Lovingly called 'the little boy from Rosario' in Argentina, he scored a dreamy hat-trick, equalling Germany's Miroslav Klose all-time World Cup goal-score of 16. The 38-year-old legend became the first man to play in six World Cups. This was his 200th international match. His performance has silenced doubts over his recent hamstring injury. Argentina is eyeing its fourth World Cup win —*FIFA*

7 K'TAKA MLC SEATS GO TO POLLS

BENGALURU, 17 JUNE

Biennial elections to seven seats in the Karnataka Legislative Council will be held on Thursday, with intense lobbying and "resort politics" dominating the run-up to the fiercely contested seventh seat.

Eight candidates are in the fray for the seven vacancies. Congress has fielded five candidates — BK Hariprasad, Tippanappa Kamaknur, PV Mohan, Shivanna BS and Vinay Karthik Prakash — while the BJP has nominated Lingaraj Patil and Raghu R. The JD(S) has fielded Govindaraju. Congress and the BJP have the numbers to comfortably secure four and two seats, respectively. However, the seventh seat has turned into a direct contest between Congress candidate Vinay Karthik and JD(S) nominee Govindaraju. —*PTI*

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Telegram moves HC against govt ban over NEET leak

NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Centre to file its reply on Telegram's plea against its order, temporarily restricting access to the messaging app, ahead of the 21 June National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Undergraduate) (NEET-UG) 2026 re-examination.

The court adjourned the hearing to Thursday and issued notice to the Centre.

During the hearing, Telegram's counsel questioned the legality of the government order blocking the platform. He said that over 150 million users had been affected by the Centre's action on Tuesday. Solicitor General (SG) Tushar Mehta defended the government action, saying the platform was being misused and he would reveal "something shocking" tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Telegram has stopped working for existing users in India after the government temporarily restricted access to the app, but it continues to remain operational through Virtual Protocol Network (VPN), according to industry experts.

Google delisted the app on Tuesday, and Apple's Appstore has also removed it now.

"Blocking of Telegram will not help the paper leak. It continues to be operational on VPNs which bypass Indian servers and connect with foreign servers for operations," Voyager Infosec Director, Jiten Jain, told PTI.

Telegram CEO Pavel Durov on Tuesday said the ban will not stop paper leaks, instead move it on to other apps. —*PTI*

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IGNOU exam papers allegedly sold on Telegram for Rs 199

NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

Reports have claimed that question papers for multiple subjects in the Indira Gandhi National Open University's (IGNOU) end-term examinations were allegedly put up for sale on Telegram for Rs 199 each. The report said IGNOU alerted its regional centres but did not cancel any examination as it found no evidence of such activity.

IGNOU's June-July term-end examinations are being held from 1 June to 21 July. Nine lakh students are appearing more than 900 examination centres. On 4 June, the student evaluation division said it received complaints from students, screenshots of chats. Students received emails warning sharing questions could lead to cancellation. The university referred police complaint. Despite no evidence, faculty said measures include observers, mobile restrictions, banning unauthorised access at centres. — *Salar News*

Messi's team writes to WB cops, blames ex-min for chaos

KOLKATA, 17 JUNE

The organiser of Lionel Messi's India tour, which descended into chaos at Salt Lake Stadium last year, on Wednesday claimed that the football legend's communication team has written to the Bidhannagar Police holding former West Bengal sports minister Aroop Biswas responsible for the fiasco. Event organiser Satadru Dutta, who was arrested and jailed on charges of mismanagement under the previous TMC government, said the communication exonerated him and blamed lapses in protocol and security arrangements. The police, however, declined to comment. The letter, shared by Dutta and whose authenticity could not be independently verified by PTI, alleged that the approved protocol was violated when the then sports minister entered the field and participated in unscheduled activities. It also cited repeated unscheduled interactions with Messi and the presence of unauthorised persons and around 40 unaccredited photographers in restricted areas. The event on December 13 last year ended in chaos as overcrowding and security breaches forced Messi to leave early, triggering vandalism by angry spectators. —*PTI*

TOP 15TH STARTUP ECOSYSTEM

B'luru is 2nd best AI-native cluster in Asia

BENGALURU, 17 JUNE

Bengaluru has been ranked the second-best AI-native startup cluster in Asia and placed 15th among the world's leading startup ecosystems, reinforcing its position as India's technology and innovation capital.

The report noted that Bengaluru ranked second in Asia in "AI nativity", a measure of how deeply artificial intelligence is embedded within a startup ecosystem. The city is home to nearly half of India's AI engineers and produces around one lakh technical graduates every year, giving it a significant advantage in the global race for AI innovation.

According to the Global Startup Ecosystem Report (GSER) 2026 by Startup Genome, Bengaluru's startup ecosystem is valued at $152.8 billion (around 13 lakh crore), making it the third-largest startup ecosystem in Asia.

Despite slipping one place from 14th to 15th compared to last year, Bengaluru remains among the world's top startup hubs. The ecosystem generated about $46 billion in startup exits and is home to more than 50 unicorns across Karnataka, including 35 based in Bengaluru.

Industry experts attribute the City's continued rise to its mature venture capital ecosystem, strong research and development base, and growing investments by multinational companies in global capability centres, data centres and AI infrastructure.

The Karnataka government is also pushing new policies to strengthen the innovation ecosystem.

Bengaluru hosts 31 of Karnataka's 32 data centres, with 10 more planned. However, the AI boom's massive consumption of water — at least 1.4 million litres daily for a 20 MW facility — and power have sparked severe sustainability concerns even as the City sees its borewells dry up. The State government says it is revamping its Data Centre Policy to incentivise water-efficient and energy-efficient operations.

The report draws on data from more than 5.5 million companies across 350+ entrepreneurial innovation ecosystems. —*Agencies*

WHAT IS AI STARTUP CLUSTER?

A REGION OR METROPOLITAN TECH HUB WITH A HIGH CONCENTRATION OF COMPANIES BUILT ENTIRELY AROUND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.

B'LURU IN NUMBERS

Has	Startup ecosystem valued at	Houses
3rd largest startup ecosystem in Asia	$152.8 billion	35 unicorns, and counting

MPs GO MIA

Sena split 2.0? Raut says MPs offered Rs 50 cr to join NDA

MUMBAI, 17 JUNE

Amid heightened speculation about an imminent split in the Shiv Sena (UBT), party leader Sanjay Raut on Wednesday alleged that some Members of Parliament (MPs) from Maharashtra were being offered Rs 50 crore to switch sides, and challenged dissidents to quit.

Senior leaders on Wednesday claimed that they have no confirmed information about the whereabouts of the MPs at the centre of the rumours and that they are missing.

"I was told that the rate is Rs 50 crore, and Rs 15 crore each would be delivered by tonight," he said, at a press conference in New Delhi.

The leaders also alleged that the practice of "buying and breaking" elected representatives posed a threat to democracy and the Constitution.

"If parties are being broken in this manner, fighting elections is meaningless," said Raut. "If anybody wants to leave, they should first resign. They have entered Parliament on our party's ticket." Raut further said the party had initiated legal measures and issued a whip ahead of a meeting of its parliamentary party scheduled for Thursday. It had also written to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, urging him to act strictly.

During the presser, Raut lost his cool and called revek MPs "bh*nch*d" twice. —*PTI*

Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Sanjay Raut addresses a press conference, in New Delhi on Wednesday —*PTI*

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Govt targets $420B economy for B'luru by 2037

BENGALURU, 17 JUNE

The Karnataka government is preparing an ambitious economic master plan for the Bengaluru Metropolitan Region (BMR), aiming to expand the regional economy to USD 390-420 billion and generate up to 30 lakh new jobs by 2037, officials said on Wednesday.

A high-level steering committee chaired by Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh reviewed the roadmap prepared by the Institute for Sustainability, Employment and Growth (ISEG) Foundation on 16 June. The exercise follows a Statement of Intent signed between the State government and ISEG in May to develop a long-term economic strategy for the region. Spread across nearly 8,000 sq km and home to around 1.5 crore people, the BMR currently has an economy valued at about USD 149 billion and contributes more than 43 per cent of Karnataka's GDP. Officials said the region's per capita GDP of about USD 9,700 is nearly double the State average and four driving investments in IT, biotechnology, manufacturing, logistics, research and commercial development.

Major infrastructure proposals include a 287-km circular rail network, up to 500 km of additional metro lines, Regional Rapid Transit Workshop' to be held in late June, followed by a second workshop in July. The steering committee is scheduled to meet again on 28 July and 25 August before the final master plan is presented to the CM and Deputy CM in the first week of September. —*PTI*

KEY TARGETS

- 287km circular rail network
- 400-500km Metro network.
- 100–200 km of greenfield Metro corridors and extensions.
- 'Growth Centres' to be built inside and outside the City to relieve stress on core areas.

—MOHAMMED ASAD

Kolar Lokayukta SP's phone hacked

KOLAR, 17 JUNE

Several senior officials in Kolar were left surprised late on Tuesday after receiving messages from the phone number of Lokayukta Superintendent of Police Anthony John seeking an urgent loan of Rs 55,000. The messages, sent to scores of people, claimed the SP was in dire need of money and promised repayment within two hours, before asking recipients to share their UPI details. The request quickly raised suspicion among officials. Sources in the Lokayukta said John later realised his phone number had been hacked and informed the police. Kolar Superintendent of Police Kannika Sikriwal said many individuals had received the messages, but no formal complaint had been filed so far. Police have advised people not to transfer money in response to such requests. —*SALAR NEWS*

D'sthala case: Prakash Raj flays Chinnaiah's claims

'Passed voice memos to SIT'; highlights 470 unclaimed bodies

BENGALURU, 17 JUNE

Renowned actor and social activist Prakash Raj on Wednesday said CN Chinnaiah—the key complainant and now accused in the Dharmasthala mass burials case—had spoken to him over the phone and sent him information through an audio recording, which he promptly shared with the SIT Chief probing the case.

The clarification comes after Chinnaiah filed a writ petition before the Karnataka High Court, claiming he was used as part of a larger conspiracy, involving funds to malign Dharmasthala. Chinnaiah, who had approached police last year claiming to have buried hundreds of bodies in the town over decades, reportedly named activist Mahesh Shetty Timarodi, Girish Mattannavar, Vitthal Gowda and Jayant among others, accusing them of "orchestrating a campaign" against Dharmasthala. Raj's name also appears in the petition.

Actor and activist Prakash Raj at a press conference in Bengaluru on Wednesday —*PTI*

Speaking at a press conference, Raj said that he received a call from activist Mattannavar, stating that Chinnaiah wanted to speak to him. Raj said Chinnaiah spoke to him in Tamil and wanted to meet personally. However, Raj said he declined the offer.

When Chinnaiah insisted, he asked him to record whatever information he had and send it across.

"As a citizen, what should I do? I got information from a fellow whom everybody is speculating about. Immediately, I contacted SIT Chief Pronab Mohanty," he said.

The actor said he later met the SIT Chief and handed over the recording, whom, he said, thanked him.

Referring to reports about Rs 200 crore mentioned in Chinnaiah's writ petition, Raj said the public had the right to know what happened and "This is where it ends".

Raj also alleged that a "manufactured defamation campaign" against him as leaders, including from the BJP have called him "anti-Hindu" when he speaks on various issues.

Raj questioned why discussions were focused on allegations involving him instead of reports concerning unclaimed bodies and the Sowjanya death case.

"Are you not worried about the deaths? There is a report to the Women's Commission that 30 women's deaths are not tallying with records. There are 470 unclaimed bodies buried over the years. There is the Sowjanya case. We want justice," he said. —*PTI*

BJP mocks Cong over resort politics ahead of polls

BENGALURU, 17 JUNE

Taking a dig at the ruling Congress over its legislators camping at a resort on the outskirts of Bengaluru ahead of the 18 June Legislative Council election, State BJP President BY Vijayendra on Wednesday said Chief Minister DK Shivakumar seems to have lost confidence in his party MLAs barely 15 days after assuming power.

He expressed confidence that the BJP will comfortably win two of the seven seats going for polls. The Congress hopes to win five of the seats.

"There is no necessity for us to go to any resort," Vijayendra quipped.

The Congress held its legislature party meeting on Tuesday night at a resort in Bidadi. On Wednesday, legislators were familiarised with the voting process using a model ballot paper, and the allocation of preferential votes was discussed to ensure no vote becomes invalid.

CM DK Shivakumar on Wednesday participates in a mock voting exercise ahead of the Legislative Council polls —*SALAR*

Reports say that the MLCs are lodged in a resort near Wonderla to avoid horse trading. Several Madhya Pradesh Congress legislators were also lodged in a resort near the park ahead of the Rajya Sabha bypolls earlier. —*PTI*

Rs 3K cr Whitefield land case: HC orders new trial

BENGALURU, 17 JUNE

The Karnataka High Court has ordered a fresh hearing in the dispute over a 78-acre land parcel in Bengaluru's Whitefield area, valued at more than Rs 3,000 crore. A Division Bench set aside a vacation bench order that had granted relief to Embassy East Business Park Ltd and directed that the case be heard by the regular roster bench. The case concerns land in Whitefield's Kadugodi Industrial Area, including a 25-acre portion worth about Rs 1,125 crore that was later transferred to semiconductor firm Lam Research. —*ANI*

—X @PCMOHANMP

KR Market parking fiasco: PC Mohan meets GBA boss

BENGALURU, 17 JUNE

BJP MP PC Mohan met GBA Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao on Wednesday and urged the civic body to reconsider the pay-and-park system at KR Market. "The new rules require farmers and traders to park 300–400 metres away, increasing the time and cost of transporting vegetables, flowers and fruits to the wholesale market," Mohan said in a statement on X. A day earlier, numerous farmer and vendor organisations protested the system and demanded its roll, with the Rao then promising free parking for farmers. The recently launched single-floor parking system can hold around 200 cars and 400 two-wheelers. —*SALAR NEWS*

—X @THECHAINSMOKERS

The Chainsmokers set for first-ever Bengaluru concert

BENGALURU, 17 JUNE

The Chainsmokers, the global electronic music duo known for Grammy-winning hits 'Don't Let Me Down' and 'Closer', are set to return to India for a three-city tour this year, including their first-ever performance in Bengaluru on 20 December. The duo, Drew Taggart and Alex Pall, will headline the Mumbai edition of Sunburn Festival 2026, with shows in Mumbai on 18 December, Delhi on 19 December and Bengaluru on 20 December. "For Indian millennials and Gen Z, their songs became part of core youth culture moments over the last decade. We understand the emotional excitement fans have around witnessing them live again, especially at a time when nostalgia and shared cultural experiences are driving fan communities globally," said Karan Singh, CEO of Sunburn. —*PTI*

BJP leaders Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, R Ashoka and BY Vijayendra interact with residents near Bidadi on Wednesday —*X@RASHOKABJP*

Can't make layout in 1.5 years: Ashoka on Bidadi township

BENGALURU, 17 JUNE

During a protest against the State government's land acquisition for the proposed Greater Bengaluru Integrated Township (GBIT) at Bidadi, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka warned that the that the project could outlast the current government's tenure.

"I will advise (Chief Minister) DK Shivakumar: You cannot make the layout in 1.5 years. Another government will come," Ashoka remarked, suggesting that the project's timeline is unrealistic. He has previously said that if the BJP government was elected in 2028, it would denotify the land.

The project is expected to cover 7,481 acres across nine villages in the region.

The government has issued a final notification for the acquisition of 499 acres across three villages in Ramanagara and Harohalli taluks in the first of a series of notifications.

Farmers have been protesting against the township for over 470 days.

Meanwhile, JD(S) leader Nikhil Kumaraswamy has called for protests on 21 June, while farmer bodies have said they would protest on 22 June.

However, Shivakumar has hit back at the BJP, saying that they are attempting to "stop development in the State". He said he would apprise their High Command. —*Agencies*

'CREEPY MINDSET'

Poster politics? HDK slams DKS over fliers on his family

BENGALURU, 17 JUNE

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy on Wednesday slammed Chief Minister DK Shivakumar after posters appeared on the Mysuru-Bengaluru highway accusing Kumaraswamy's family and BJP leaders BY Vijayendra, R Ashoka, and Chalavadi Narayanaswamy of being involved in the land mafia.

Responding to the posters allegedly put up by Congress workers, the JD(S) leader said, "I thought that at least after becoming the CM, he would leave making blue films and posters. That habit hasn't gone."

Anitha Kumaraswamy, the Union Minister's wife, also

reacted to the allegations. "They have put up posters saying 100 acres of land belong to Nikhil and me. I bought 46 acres of land 40 years ago. Apart from that, where do I have land in my name? Is it right to put up somebody's poster and ask for land?"

HD Kumaraswamy alleged that Shivakumar himself was involved in irregularities.

"The same person who got land in the name of dead people in Garaganahalli is trying to portray something. Will people believe it?... Doing all this without any standard shows which way the State will go. It's a creepy mindset."

"Doesn't he need to show some respect to the CM chair? Tell officers to take action (against my family) if any wrong is done. Instead of that, being CM and making allegations through posters, what does it show?" he added.

HD Kumaraswamy also alleged that Shivakumar was misusing his name to "loot money and grab land", likely a reference to the Greater Bengaluru Integrated Township. —*ANI*

Kalaburagi police sub-inspector dies by suicide

KALABURAGI, 17 JUNE

A police sub-Inspector allegedly died by suicide at his residence in Ganga Nagar, Kalaburagi on 16 June. Basavaraj Herur, a PSI from the 2014 batch, had been serving in the District Crime Records Bureau (DCRB) section at the District Police Office in Kalaburagi for the past two years. He reportedly hanged himself from a ceiling fan using a saree.

According to police, "Late last night, Basavaraj called some of his friends and informed them about his intention to take his own life. His friends immediately conveyed the information to his father. By the time his father broke open the door and entered the room, Basavaraj had already died by suicide."

Sources further stated that Basavaraj's father is a retired government employee, while his wife is a senior primary school teacher. The couple has three daughters.

Basavaraj's father, Shantappa Herur, said, "We do not know the exact reason behind his suicide."

A case has been registered at the Raghavendra Nagar Police Station in Kalaburagi. —*Salar News*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

Uban naxals have hijacked Cong: CTR

BENGALURU, 17 JUNE

BJP leader CT Ravi on Wednesday said that "Urban Naxals have hijacked the brains of the Congress" after Home Minister Priyank Kharge raised questions over the registration status of the RSS.

Ravi said the organisation has been serving the nation for nearly a century and does not rely on government funds or donations for its activities. —*PTI*

K'taka AIIMS doc found dead

BENGALURU, 17 JUNE

Police recovered the body of Dr Divya V, a 26-year-old doctor from Karnataka and senior resident in the Pharmacology Department at AIIMS Bhubaneswar, from her rented flat in Dumuduma under Khandagiri police limits on Tuesday.

She was found hanging, a senior officer said. The deceased had been on sick leave and shared the flat with another woman. The roomate alerted the police on Tuesday after she found Divya's room locked and received no response from her, according to Khandagiri Police Station Officer-in-Charge Abhimanyu Das. The police recovered the body along with a suicide note, and a preliminary investigation suggests she died by suicide. The body was handed over to her family after a post-mortem at AIIMS, Das said —*PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

'NO STAFF SHORTAGE'

As 12 die, Mysuru Jayadeva says not unusual

MYSURU, 17 JUNE

After footage of a man claiming that 12 people died due to lack of doctors at the Mysuru Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences & Research went viral on social media on Tuesday night, the hospital director denied that deaths occurred due, saying that the patients who passed away were already in a critical condition.

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday after checking in on the facility, Mysuru's Jayadeva Hospital director Dr HB Dinesha said that about 62 patients have died this month in the institution.

He noted that the hospital primarily registers patients

from Mysuru and its adjoining districts - Kodagu, Chamarajanagar, Hassan. Between 600 to 800 patients daily are registered to the hospital as it was a common referral hospital by the government for heartcare critical patients.

However, among the inpatients admitted to the hospital, 20 per cent are usually in a critical stage. Dr Dinesha said that the survival for such risky patients is only around 5-10 per cent.

"(But) the hospital admits serious cases, provides treatment for them in ICU facilities without considering their economic background," he added. "Those 12 people who died by heart attack at the hospital on Tuesday were all aged, sick, diabetic and admitted beyond the golden hours of the last stages of treatment. They were also suffering from chronic heart problems. Except for one patient, the remaining were all above 50 years old."

Dr Dinesha also dismissed the viral video's allegations of shortage of doctors, specialists, staff. He noted that the mortality rate of the hospital stood at 5.37 per cent against the national average of 12. 57 per cent. — *Salar News*

TRADERS TO GO ON STRIKE TODAY, ALLEGE HARASSMENT FROM GOVT

BENGALURU, 17 JUNE

More than 58,000 bakery owners, beeda shop operators, street vendors, condiment sellers and other small traders in Bengaluru have announced an indefinite strike from Thursday, alleging harassment by various government departments.

Addressing a press conference, Karnataka Rajya Karmika Parishat state president Ravi Shetty Baindoor said small business owners are facing frequent inspections, penalties and intimidation despite operating legally and paying taxes.

He claimed traders are routinely summoned to police stations and civic offices, subjected to prolonged questioning and, in some cases, threatened with closure.

As part of the protest, bakeries and small shops across Bengaluru will observe a complete bandh.

A Statewide agitation has also been called, though only a partial shutdown is expected in other districts.

The association alleged that officials impose hefty fines on small retailers for possessing banned plastic covers while failing to act against large manufacturers and wholesale suppliers.

Traders also complained that they are penalised for selling certain tobacco products even though such products continue to be legally available in the market. —*Agencies*

Frenzied lobbying marks eve of J'khand RS polls

RANCHI, 17 JUNE

Frenzied lobbying and strategy meetings marked the eve of the Rajya Sabha elections in Jharkhand on Wednesday, with both the ruling INDIA bloc and the opposition NDA huddling in hotels in Ranchi to finalise their poll strategy.

Congress sources said the party was likely to shift its MLAs to a hotel, although its leaders maintained there was no such plan and that legislators would only visit the hotel where AICC observers were staying. The NDA had already moved its 24 MLAs to a hotel on Tuesday.

Three candidates are in the fray for two seats -- JMM's Baidyanath Ram, Congress nominee Pranav Jha and BJP-backed Independent Parimal Nathwani. While the JMM has enough numbers to secure one seat, a close contest is expected between Jha and Nathwani for the second.

The INDIA bloc, which has 56 MLAs, held mock polls and strategy meetings, expressing confidence of winning both seats.

BJP state Chief Aditya Sahu claimed some opposition MLAs would vote "according to their conscience".

RJD and CPI(ML) leaders also met the Congress leaders at the hotel. "I was here for a courtesy visit. All our MLAs are intact, and we (INDIA bloc) will win both the seats," CPI(ML) Liberation legislator Arup Chatterjee said.

A candidate requires 28 first-preference votes to win. —*PTI*

Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren held a meeting with INDIA bloc ministers at his residence in Ranchi to review strategy for Rajya Sabha polls —*X/ HEMANT SOREN*

After TMC & Sena, is Samajwadi Party to split next?

BJP predicts split; Akhilesh says party united

LUCKNOW, 17 JUNE

Amid political turmoil in the Trinamool Congress and speculation over a split in Shiv Sena (UBT), Uttar Pradesh minister Om Prakash Rajbhar on Wednesday claimed that the Samajwadi Party (SP) was heading for a major split, with several leaders ready to join the BJP.

Rajbhar, who heads the Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP), claimed SP leader Ram Gopal Yadav had submitted a letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah. In a post on X, he alleged that pressure arising from investigations into the mining scam and Gomti riverfront scam had unsettled the opposition party.

"The entire SP is ready to join the BJP," Rajbhar claimed.

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya echoed the charge, saying 25-26 SP MPs were prepared to break away. The SP currently has 37 Lok Sabha MPs from Uttar Pradesh.

SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, however, dismissed the claims, asserting that his party remained strong and united.

"The SP remains united. It weathered many ups and downs in its journey. It is a strong party, and it remains so," he said.

Yadav accused the BJP of engineering defections through inducements and pressure, saying the ruling party had previously poached SP legislators, MLCs and Rajya Sabha members.

"There must have been some self-interest, some lure or some fear. People who get scared leave their party," he said, adding that challenging the BJP required courage and conviction.

He also took a swipe at his rivals, saying those predicting splits in other parties should first assess their own political prospects. Meanwhile, Maurya said the BJP was not trying to split the SP but claimed its MPs would leave on their own before the 2027 Assembly polls.

SP spokesperson Fakhrul Hasan Chaand countered Rajbhar's remarks, alleging that the minister's son, Arun Rajbhar, had met Akhilesh Yadav seeking the merger of the SBSP with the SP to "save backward-class politics". — *PTI*

SP Chief Akhilesh Yadav, along with party leaders, during a press conference at the party office in Lucknow on Wednesday —*PTI*

TMC split: Speaker invites Abhishek for meeting

NEW DELHI, 17 JUN

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has invited Trinamool Congress leader **Abhishek Banerjee** for a meeting on 19 June to present his case on the split in the Mamata Banerjee-led party, parliamentary sources said on Wednesday.

However, TMC sources said the party had not received any communication from the Speaker's Office till 3pm.

The move comes after 20 rebel TMC MPs sought recognition as a separate group following their merger with the Nationalist Citizens Party of India. Birla has decided to hear both factions before taking a decision.

On 10 June, Banerjee wrote to the Speaker urging him not to accord recognition, status or facilities to any group claiming to be a separate faction of the All India Trinamool Congress. He argued that the Constitution and anti-defection law do not permit a split within an existing political party.

Banerjee, whose letter was also submitted by MPs Kirti Azad and Sagarika Ghose, cited the Supreme Court's Maharashtra political crisis judgment, saying the defence of a "split" no longer exists under the Tenth Schedule. He also maintained that any merger requires both the merger of the political party and the support of two-thirds of legislators. Sources said Birla would decide the matter in accordance with the law and rules. —*PTI*

TMC Supremo Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday led an unscheduled protest march in central Kolkata against the eviction of hawkers —*PTI*

ED questions Vijayan's daughter for over nine hours

KOCHI, 17 JUNE

Veena T, daughter of former Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, was questioned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for over nine hours on Wednesday in a money laundering case.

Veena arrived at the ED office around 10:30 am accompanied by her husband, CPI(M) MLA PA Mohamed Riyas, and left at 8.00 pm amid heavy police deployment. She had skipped an earlier 12 June summons citing health reasons.

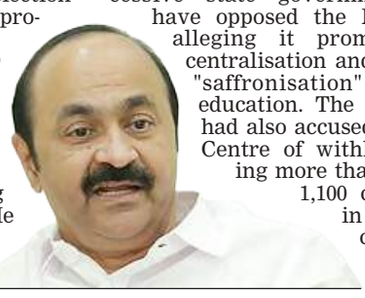
The probe, initiated under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act following a April 2025 Serious Fraud Investigation Office complaint, alleges that Cochin Minerals and Rutile Ltd (CMRL) paid Rs 2.78 crore to Veena's now-defunct IT firm, Exalogic Solutions, without receiving any services. Furthermore, another Kartha-operated firm, Empower India Capital Investments, allegedly extended a Rs 50 lakh loan to Exalogic despite non-repayment. The ED claims these transactions generated "proceeds of crime".

The investigation stems from a 2019 Income Tax raid on CMRL that detected Rs 130 crore in suspected fictitious expenses. The ED recently questioned CMRL founder Sasidharan Kartha's wife, son, and daughter. —*PTI*

Keralam to not withdraw from PMSHRI

T'PURAM, 17 JUNE

The Kerala government on Wednesday indicated it would not withdraw from the Centre's PM SHRI scheme but would seek safeguards to retain control over the state's curriculum and the selection of schools under the programme.



Chief Minister **VD Satheesan** said the Cabinet had formed a four-member sub-committee to examine all aspects of the scheme, including its legal implications. He said the previous LDF government had already signed an agreement with the Centre and received around Rs 99 crore, while another Rs 106 crore had been sanctioned.

PM SHRI, which is linked with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, has been controversial in Kerala as successive state governments have opposed the NEP, alleging it promotes centralisation and the "saffronisation" of education. The state had also accused the Centre of withholding more than Rs 1,100 crore in education funds over its refusal to sign the agreement.

Satheesan said the government would ensure no "communal agenda" was implemented and would insist on the freedom to frame Kerala's curriculum.

The Cabinet also constituted a separate panel to modernise the state's public procurement system and make it more transparent and efficient. —*PTI*

CM says CPI(M) using 'Sangh' tactics

Kerala Chief Minister V D Satheesan on Wednesday accused the CPI(M) of adopting "Sangh Parivar-style" tactics to create communal divisions and gain electoral advantage in the controversial 'Kafir screenshot' case. His remarks came a day after a DYFI leader was arrested for allegedly first sharing the fake screenshot targeting Congress MP Shafi Parambil during the 2024 Lok Sabha campaign in Vadakara. Satheesan alleged the CPI(M)'s role had been exposed by the investigation and termed the party's conduct "hypocritical".

6 held over bid to free jailed TMC leader Jahangir

KOLKATA, 17 JUNE

Eight people have been arrested for allegedly attempting to storm Falta police station in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district to free jailed TMC leader Jahangir Khan. Police alleged Khan's wife masterminded the plan and mobilised supporters, and an FIR has been lodged against her. Security forces, acting on intelligence inputs, thwarted the attempt during a protest demanding Khan's release. Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari said those involved would face stringent action and their properties could be confiscated. Khan, arrested on 8 June near the India-Nepal border, faces extortion and among other charges. —*PTI*

'We the Leaders' will be political party by July: Annamalai

CHENNAI, 17 JUNE

Former BJP Tamil Nadu president K Annamalai on Wednesday said his "We the Leaders" movement was on the right track to transform into a political party by July, with a target of enrolling 50 lakh members. Speaking on social media, Annamalai said the organisation had already attracted 18 lakh members "without any expectations" through both online and direct outreach. He promised the outfit would treat all religions equally and focus on issues affecting Tamil Nadu, particularly drug abuse among youth. Annamalai said the party would encourage professionals to enter politics and introduce term limits for politicians to ensure generational change in leadership. —*PTI*

TMC ally resigns as chief of Gorkhaland Territorial Admin

DARJEELING, 17 JUNE

BGPM president **Anit Thapa** on Wednesday resigned as chief executive and member of the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA), the semi-autonomous body governing Darjeeling and Kalimpong hills in West Bengal.

An ally of the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC, Thapa announced his resignation on social media a day after Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari said his government would probe corruption allegations in the GTA and take action against those found guilty.

Sources close to Thapa said the Bharatiya Gorkha Prajatantrik Morcha (BGPM) would cooperate with the BJP government for the development of the hills.

During a visit to Kurseong on Tuesday, Adhikari alleged that Rs 180 crore allocated to the GTA in 2024-25 had been embezzled. He promised to allocate more than double the amount for projects, including a medical college and road infrastructure, and vowed action against those involved in alleged financial irregularities and illegal teacher appointments.

The GTA was set up in 2011 by the Mamata Banerjee government to address demands for a separate Gorkhaland state. During the campaign for the West Bengal polls, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had promised a "permanent political solution" within the framework of the Constitution for the hills, without dividing the state. —*PTI*

RSS alleges petrol bomb attack on Ranchi office, SIT formed

RANCHI, 17 JUNE

The RSS on Wednesday alleged that petrol bombs were hurled at its office in Ranchi in the early hours, prompting police to constitute a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the incident.

The alleged attack took place around 12.30 am at the RSS office in Nivaranpur under the Chutia police station area. RSS functionaries claimed petrol bombs were thrown at the premises, though police said the exact nature of the objects used would be confirmed only after forensic examination.

Ranchi SSP Rakesh Ranjan said parts of two glass bottles were recovered from the spot and sent for forensic analysis. CCTV footage showed suspicious activity, with preliminary findings suggesting two persons hired a private taxi to carry out the attack.

Union Minister Sanjay Seth termed the incident a "serious conspiracy" aimed at disturbing peace in the state capital, while Leader of Opposition Babulal Marandi demanded swift arrests and a permanent police outpost near the RSS office. —*PTI*

RAHUL GANDHI'S KOTA RALLY

'Edu system an extortion machine, rejection system'

NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday described India's education system as a "rejection system" rather than a selection system, alleging that it places excessive financial burden and stress on students and middle-class families.

Addressing a gathering 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' at Kota, the country's coaching hub, Gandhi said the current education structure was "extremely stressful and unfair". "India's education system is an extortion machine. We want a system that allows you to dream big," he said, adding that students are subjected to "pain, stress and unhappiness".

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said the system crushes aspirations and pushes students into a narrow set of career paths. "Why is India only asking children to do five things? The answer is money, because the system makes money through these routes," he alleged, naming SSC, UPSC, RRB, JEE and NEET.

MUMMY, PAPA .. APKA MUJH PAR
BHAROSA THA KI MERI BETI PADH
LEGI AUR DOCTOR BAN JAEGI PAR
DOBARA NEET DENE KI HIMMAT NHI
HAI MERE ANDAR. PEHLE NEET K
PAPER ME MERE ACHE MARKS AA
RAHE THE PAR AB DOBARA PAPER
ACHA JAYE ISKI KYA GARANTEE.
SORRY MUMMY, PAPA
BARBAD KAR DIYA
(SNEHA)

Rahul Gandhi addresses 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' rally in Kota, part of Congress campaign on paper leaks, with hundreds of students attending. Ahead of the event, Cong accused BJP of discouraging participation, while BJP questioned its timing ahead of the NEET re-examination scheduled for 21 June —*PTI*

Gandhi said lakhs of students spend heavily on coaching, schooling, uniforms and hostel fees with no guarantee of success. Citing NEET, he said around 22 lakh students appear for the exam, with less than one lakh selected, making the process "brutal and exclusionary".

He claimed families collectively spend sums comparable to the government's education budget on preparation for major exams. "Out of every thousand students, only a few get salaried jobs. The rest are left struggling," he said, adding that around 80 per cent of engineers remain unemployed.

Gandhi also argued that the system discourages diverse aspirations and forces students into a limited set of outcomes. "The education system should help every Indian dream big and achieve that dream at the lowest possible cost," he said.

During the programme, Gandhi interacted with five students, including NEET, JEE and UPSC aspirants, along with their parents, discussing preparation costs, aspirations and chances of selection. A large number of students from Kota's coaching institutes attended the event. According to a Congress release, Gandhi will launch a nationwide education campaign with NSUI and Youth Congress to highlight student concerns, seek accountability, and push for reforms. —*PTI*

Locals pressured not to attend: Pilot

Congress alleged that the government was using the "full might of the state" to sabotage Rahul Gandhi's student convention in Kota. Congress leader Sachin Pilot claimed authorities had removed banners and posters related to Gandhi's visit and were pressuring people not to attend the programme. He also alleged that students across Rajasthan and other parts of the country were under stress due to uncertainties surrounding examinations and results. "Lakhs of children and their families have suffered due to flaws in the examination system," Pilot said. Congress spokesperson Ragini Nayak said the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi were anxious as students were rallying behind Gandhi, adding that the ruling party feared its "throne is tottering".

—SCREENGRAB

Elusive Mishmi Takin caught on camera for 1st time

GANGTOK, 17 JUNE

The first-ever video footage of the elusive Mishmi Takin has been recorded in Sikkim, marking one of the most significant confirmed sightings of the vulnerable species in the state in over two decades.

The Forest and Environment Department said officials spotted and filmed a herd of eight Mishmi Takins in the Bakuchen area of the Tingda Reserve Forest in North Sikkim during a routine patrol. Often described as a "goat-antelope", the Mishmi Takin is a large high-altitude ungulate native to the eastern Himalayas and is listed as Vulnerable on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List. The species inhabits rugged terrain up to 4,500m and is known for its stocky build, shaggy coat and ability to withstand extreme weather. *—PTI*

Shimla unveils 5-point traffic plan amid tourist rush

SHIMLA, 17 JUNE

With around 15 lakh vehicles entering Shimla between 1 May and 15 June, police have rolled out a five-point strategy to manage the heavy summer tourist rush.Superintendent of Police Gaurav Singh said the plan includes deployment of additional personnel, interceptor vehicles and bike-borne teams, strict monitoring by gazetted officers, use of alternative routes and promotion of public transport. Tourist inflow has surged as schools close for summer holidays, with hotel occupancy touching 80-90 per cent on weekends. The city has been divided into five sectors for better traffic management, while 210 additional police personnel, home guards and volunteers have been deployed. *—PTI*

Rs 138 cr walnut import duty fraud busted; 5 arrested

MUMBAI, 17 JUNE

Authorities have busted a sophisticated customs duty evasion racket involving fraudulent walnut imports at Nhava Sheva, causing a revenue loss of Rs 138.84 crore. Five people have been arrested so far. Under 'Operation CO-FIND', the Central Intelligence Unit of Jawaharlal Nehru Customs House found consignments from China, the US and Chile were routed via the UAE and falsely declared as originating from Afghanistan to claim SAFTA benefits, reducing duty from 110 per cent to 5 per cent. Forged shipping documents were used. Investigators are probing beneficiaries, while the Bombay High Court has backed recovery safeguards. *—PTI*

—ANI

Nolan, Matt Damon & Holland to visit India for 'Odyssey'

MUMBAI, 17 JUNE

Mumbai will host the first-ever India premiere of a Christopher Nolan film when 'The Odyssey' is unveiled in the city next month. Nolan, producer Emma Thomas and stars Matt Damon and Tom Holland will attend the event as part of the film's global premiere tour, which also includes London, Paris and New York. The epic, based on Homer's tale of Odysseus' decade-long journey home after the fall of Troy, is the first feature shot entirely with IMAX cameras. The film releases worldwide on 17 July and boasts an ensemble cast. *—PTI*

Alarming satellite pics show monsoon clouds leave India

Rainfall between 4 and 15 June plunged 64% below normal

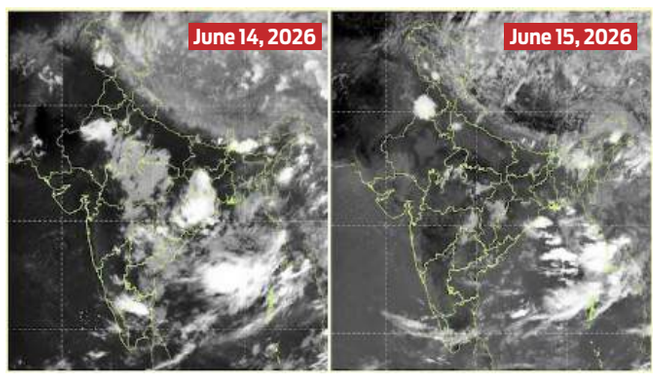
NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

India's southwest monsoon has shown worrying signs of stagnation, with satellite images revealing vast cloud-free stretches over central and western India as the national rainfall deficit widened to 40 per cent, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

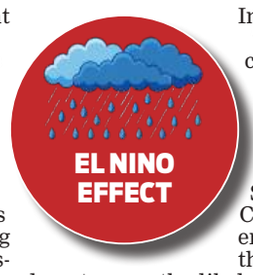
An INSAT-3DS image captured on 15 June showed large parts of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and interior Karnataka largely devoid of cloud cover, signalling a weakening of monsoon activity over the country's key agricultural belt.

Rainfall between 4 June and 15 June plunged 64 per cent below normal, with the country receiving just 19.2 mm against the usual 53.7 mm. The deficit moderated to 40 per cent by June 17, with cumulative rainfall at 39.7 mm compared with a normal of 65.9 mm.

Maharashtra recorded a 79 per cent rainfall deficit, Gujarat 98 per cent, Jharkhand 66 per cent, Chhattisgarh 65 per cent and Meghalaya 85 per cent. Karnataka, Telangana, Odisha, Bihar and Assam also reported deficient rainfall.



An INSAT-3DS satellite image on 15 June showed Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and interior Karnataka largely devoid of cloud cover, just a day after clouds covered much of India



Weather experts attributed the slowdown to weak moisture flow from the Arabian Sea and unfavourable upper-level winds suppressing rain-bearing systems over central and western India. Most organised convection remains confined to the Bay of Bengal, Northeast India and parts of the equatorial Indian Ocean.

The delay has raised concerns for kharif crops such as paddy, soybean, cotton and pulses, as June is crucial for sowing.

Agriculture Secretary Atish Chandra said the government was awaiting the IMD's forecast on the likely onset of El Nino by the end of June before deciding on measures to mitigate any impact on the kharif season. *—PTI*

Thane farmers asked to hold off sowing

With monsoon rains delayed, the Thane district administration has advised farmers to postpone sowing kharif crops until the region receives at least 100 mm of rainfall to ensure seedling survival. District Superintendent Agricultural Officer Rameshwar Pache urged farmers not to rush sowing and recommended early-maturing paddy varieties to tackle the dry spell. The advisory also suggested spraying a one per cent urea solution during the nursery stage to improve water-stress tolerance. Maharashtra received only 26 per cent of its normal rainfall in the first half of June. *—PTI*

I love you mom & dad: NEET aspirant dies by suicide

DEHRADUN, 17 JUNE

A 23-year-old NEET aspirant allegedly died by suicide at her home in the Chandrabani area of Dehradun on Tuesday, leaving behind an I love you and apology note to her parents.

Riya Kumari Thapa, daughter of a Kargil War veteran, was found dead after she did not open her room in the morning. According to police, she had accompanied her family to a religious vigil the previous night and had shown no signs of depression or behavioural changes.

An academically bright student, Riya scored 96.7 per cent in Class 12 and later became a college topper. Officials said the note contained the words "Mom and Dad, I love you" along with expressions of disappointment and frustration over not being able to achieve success in her studies.

Circle Officer said statements from her parents and neighbours revealed no disturbing factors or significant changes in her behaviour. "There were no signs of isolation, withdrawal or severe depression that could point to a reason for such a drastic step," the officer said.

- Riya Kumari Thapa, daughter of a Kargil War veteran, was found dead after she did not open her room in the morning. She had accompanied her family to a religious vigil the previous night

At least five student suicides linked to NEET-related stress have been reported across India since allegations of a paper leak in the 3 May examination surfaced. *—ANI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

DIPKE ATTACKERS GET HERO'S WELCOME

Two men accused of attacking Cockroach Janta Party founder Abhijeet Dipke (left) during a protest in Jaipur are garlanded on Wednesday by supporters after being released from police custody. Videos circulating on social media show the duo receiving a warm welcome outside a police station amid chants of "Inquilab Zindabad" and "Bharat Mata ki Jai" *—SCREENGRABS*

Must deal harshly with 'parasite' cyber criminals: SC

NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Wednesday described cyber criminals as "parasites" who prey on innocent investors and said they must be dealt with sternly.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice V Mohana made the remarks while refusing to entertain a plea seeking clubbing of FIRs lodged against a man in different states in connection with an alleged investment fraud.

"You people are parasites and you take money from innocent investors and dupe them. For cyber criminals, we have to be very harsh," the Chief Justice observed.

"You cheat someone in Tamil Nadu, then go to Jammu and Kashmir and then to the North-East," the CJI said, adding that society's interests would be best served if cyber criminals remained behind bars.

The court asked the petitioner to approach the jurisdictional high court.

The observations come amid a surge in cyber frauds, including fake investment schemes, digital arrest scams, phishing attacks and cryptocurrency frauds. According to data cited before the court, Indians lost over Rs 3,000 crore to digital frauds by last year, while cybercrime cases crossed 86,000 between 2021 and 2023. *—PTI*

Irked CJI orders probe into misplaced case file

NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Wednesday took strong exception to allegations that the Supreme Court registry had misplaced a case file, saying he would personally look into the matter and fix responsibility if required.

The issue surfaced when an advocate mentioned before a bench comprising the CJI and Justice V Mohana that a petition filed earlier this month had not been listed for hearing. The lawyer said a representation had been made to the registrar, but the case remained unlisted as the file appeared to have been misplaced by the registry.

Seeking urgent listing, the advocate urged the court to intervene. "It is a serious matter if the registry has misplaced the file. If our registry is misplacing files in urgent matters, do you think I will only direct for listing? I must do something more," the CJI observed.

He asked the advocate to furnish details and said he wanted to examine the alleged inefficiency and ascertain the reason behind it. The CJI also asked the advocate-on-record to submit a complaint the same day.

In May, a CJI-led bench had criticised the apex court registry, terming its conduct "nasty" and saying some officials acted like "super Chief Justice of India". *—PTI*

India's defence production surges

NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

India's annual defence production touched an all-time high of Rs 1.78 lakh crore in the financial year 2025-26, the defence ministry said on Wednesday.

The milestone represents a 15.6 per cent growth over the previous fiscal year's output of Rs 1.54 lakh crore and a staggering 110 per cent increase since 2020-21 when the figure was Rs 84,643 crore, it said.

The Ministry said the rise in production is 110 per cent increase since 2020-21 when the figure was Rs 84,643 crore. The indigenous defence production has increased almost four times from Rs 43,746 crore in 2013-14, it said.

"The Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) and other PSUs accounted for approximately 76 per cent of total production, while the private sector contributed 24 per cent which is a rise from 22 per cent in 2024-25," the ministry said. "The share of the private sector is at its all-time high of around Rs 42,000 crore in 2025-26," it added.

It said the growth has contributed in achieving the record defence exports of Rs 38,424 crore in 2025-26. *—PTI*

RSS ACTIVISTS FORCE KERALA YOUTH TO REMOVE BRAZILIAN FLAG

THIRU'PURAM, 17 JUNE

Activists belonging to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) allegedly forced football fans in Kollam district of Kerala to remove flags and banners of Brazil, put up due to the ongoing FIFA World Cup 2026, saying that the green-and-yellow flags resembled Pakistan's national flag.

Fans were also reportedly threatened by officials from the Anchalummoodu Police Station, who intervened to stop the youths from hoisting the flags once they had been taken down.

Suhasini Ali, member of the politburo of the communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)), posted on her X handle that the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) organized a protest against the incident, carrying Brazil flags in Pathanamthitta.

"DYFI members M. Shajar, Adv. R. Rahul, R. Shyam, accused RSS of politicizing and communalising sports," she added. *—PTI*

Puri Rath Yatra chariot building halted briefly as carpenters protest

PURI, 17 JUNE

Construction of the three chariots for the annual Rath Yatra in Puri was disrupted for around four hours on Wednesday after carpenters staged a protest against restrictions imposed on taking home leftover timber used in the process.

Members of the Maharana Sevak community, the traditional carpenters involved in the work, stopped work and said that they are entitled to take leftover pieces of timber remaining after the construction of the three chariots under the Temple Record of Rights (RoR).

The protesting carpenters alleged that a recent directive issued by the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) prevented them from doing this.

SJTA Administrator (Niti) Priyaranjan Prusty said the issue was resolved after discussions with the chief carpenters of the three chariots.

"The work has resumed after the administration informed them that they will be given money in place of the leftover wood," Prusty said. *— PTI*

Mosque built on gram sabha land in Uttar Pradesh razed

MORADABAD, 17 JUNE

A mosque allegedly built on gram sabha land in Ber Khera village of Uttar Pradesh's Moradabad district was demolished by the administration on Wednesday as part of an anti-encroachment drive.

Police and revenue officials supervised the operation, carried out with a bulldozer amid tight security. Superintendent of Police (Rural) Kunwar Akash Singh said the exercise was completed peacefully.

Officials said revenue records classified the land as a "khad ke gaddhe" (manure pit) belonging to the gram sabha. Following verification of records, the construction was found to be unauthorised and action was initiated after completion of legal formalities.

The administration said the drive to remove illegal encroachments from government, gram sabha and public-use land would continue and urged people to verify land status and obtain necessary permissions before construction.

Earlier this month, a mosque in Didhauri village and the mazar of Hazrat Sultan Shah Baba near Kanth Road were removed in similar drives. The action comes amid administrative measures against several religious structures across Uttar Pradesh over alleged encroachment and public-safety concerns. *—PTI*

MADURAI HORROR STORY

Dalit man killed in custody cremated 101 days later

MADURAI, 17 JUNE

The body of a 26-year-old Dalit man who allegedly died due to custodial torture was cremated in Madurai on Wednesday under heavy security, 101 days after his death and following directions from the Madras High Court.

Akash, a resident of Manamadurai in Sivaganga, was arrested on 6 March in an assault case. Police claimed he fractured his leg while attempting to escape, but he reportedly told a judicial magistrate that policemen had assaulted him. He died at the Government Rajaji Hospital on 8 March.

Cop stand guard at Akash's cremation as his family mourns *—ANI*

An autopsy reportedly found 28 injuries on his body, triggering protests by his family and Dalit organisations. The case was transferred to the CB-CID, while six police personnel, including an inspector and a sub-inspector, were suspended.

The High Court later directed the CB-CID to register a murder case. The victim's family, demanding arrests and Rs 50 lakh compensation, had refused to accept the body.

On 15 June, High Court ordered that if the family did not accept the body by 5pm that day, the administration must proceed with last rites.

When police and administrative officials arrived at the hospital mortuary on Wednesday morning to move the body, his family staged a fierce protest. Law enforcement officials briefly detained the protesting relatives in a police vehicle before bringing them to the crematorium.

The situation turned highly emotional at the crematorium when Akash's mother broke down in tears, hurling fistfuls of soil toward the police personnel and shouting that those responsible for her son's death would face retribution and ruin. *—PTI*

At G7, PM pitches for global trade framework

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, EAM S Jaishankar and NSA Ajit Doval during a meeting with European Council President Antonio Costa, unseen, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, unseen, on the sidelines of the G7 Summit, in Evian-les-Bains, France; Modi with Ursula and Costa on the sidelines of the G7 Summit, in Evian-les-Bains, France; Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky speaks with Modi – *PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday pitched for setting up a global framework to boost cooperation on connectivity and trade by combining the strengths of the G7 nations, India and the Global South countries.

He floated the proposal to set up the International Mobilisation Partnership for Accelerating Connectivity and Trade (IMPACT) while speaking at an outreach session of the G7 summit in this French commune.

Modi said the new framework can be modelled on the ambitious IMEC or India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor.

"Like the vision of IMEC, can we work on connectivity projects with countries in Africa, Latin America and the Pacific Islands?" he asked.

"By combining G7 capital, India's talent and the ownership of Global South countries, we may also consider establishing an International Mobilisation Partnership for Accelerating Connectivity and Trade (IMPACT)," Modi said.

The prime minister was speaking on the session titled 'Reviving a Balanced, Shared and Sustainable Economic Growth for All.'

"It is good that the French G7 Presidency has given importance to this topic. The reality today is - when it comes to growth, the question should not be about GDP or trade numbers. The real question is - Growth for whom, with whom and in what direction?"

The IMEC initiative was firmed up on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Delhi in 2023. Billed as a pathbreaking initiative, it envisages a vast road, railroad and shipping networks among Saudi Arabia, India, the United States and Europe with an aim to ensure integration among Asia, the Middle East and the West. The project has not taken off yet in view of the crisis in the Middle East.

"Today, many societies are becoming ageing societies while India and other countries of the Global South have abundance of young talent, entrepreneurship and skills," he said.

"To harness this natural complementarity, called for the creation of a Global Skills Partnership, where we can work together on skill mapping and promoting trusted skilled mobility," he noted.

The Group of 7 (G7) brings together seven of the world's most advanced economies: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. The European Union is also a member of the bloc.

INDIA AND EU TO SIGN HISTORIC FTA BY END OF 2026

India and the European Union will sign the ambitious free trade agreement by the end of this year, top EU leader Ursula von der Leyen said on Wednesday after holding talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi that largely focused on boosting two-way economic engagement against the backdrop of a fragile geopolitical environment.

The two sides also resolved to step up security and defence cooperation. Besides Von der Leyen, the President of the EU Commission, the meeting was joined by European Council President Antonio Costa.

The leaders stressed the expeditious signing and implementation of the trade deal as it would unlock huge opportunities for trade and investment and contribute towards diversification of supply chains, according to an Indian readout.

India and the EU announced the conclusion of the negotiations for the free trade agreement - billed as the "mother of all deals" - following the summit meeting between PM Modi and the top EU leadership on 27 January.

The free trade agreement that will account for almost a quarter of the global GDP will reduce tariffs on 99 per cent of Indian exports to the EU and cut duties on over 97 per cent of the EU's exports to India, according to officials.

The EU estimated that the deal will cut up to four billion euros in annual tariffs for European exporters.

"We will also step up security & defence cooperation. And join forces for better connectivity by advancing IMEC, the India–Middle East–Europe Corridor," Von der Leyen said. Costa also made an identical social media post.

India and the EU announced concluding negotiations for the mega trade deal at their summit meeting in January in New Delhi.

The EU, as a bloc, is India's largest trading partner in goods. For the financial year 2024-25, India's total trade in goods with the EU was worth about USD 136 billion, with exports around USD 76 billion and imports at USD 60 billion. *—PTI*

SALAR

War is destroying Lebanon's historic cities

Cultural heritage is often treated as an unfortunate casualty of war. In reality, the destruction of significant historic sites is often a deliberate and calculated part of broader efforts to claim power and territory.

Recent attacks on cultural heritage in southern Lebanon show us why protecting historic monuments is important, and inseparable from protecting the communities connected to them.

Attacks on southern Lebanon have displaced more than one million people, including in the communities of Tyre, Nabatieh, Yaroun, Bint Jbeil, Khiam, and other border towns and villages.

This kind of displacement can irreversibly maim people's cultural identities. It also further compromises historic sites, by depriving them of the care and craftsmanship of their communities. Protecting southern Lebanon's cultural heritage is an international concern. These sites hold outstanding universal value. Once destroyed, they cannot be brought back.

BEAUFORT CASTLE AND TYRE

Lebanon has a total of 73 cultural sites inscribed in UNESCO's list of Cultural Property under Enhanced Protection.

One of these is the 12th century Beaufort Castle. Having withstood several wars for more than 900 years since the Crusades, this castle is widely considered a significant cultural and historical property.

The castle was struck on 27 May and 30 May, and has been strategically occupied by Israeli forces since 31 May. This occupation has increased the risk of vandalism and looting.

Attacks on the structure are a violation of Article 15 of Protocol II of the Hague Convention, which prohibits an occupying state from using cultural property to conceal or destroy historical evidence. Such attacks are also a war crime under Article 8(2)(b)(ix) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The UNESCO World Heritage-listed city of Tyre has also been attacked multiple times since March.

This Phoenician city was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1984. Tyre is one of the oldest metropolises in the world, and is directly associated with the construction of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem.

The World Heritage-listed city was struck on 27 May, 7 June and 9 June.

Regarding the June 7 bombardment, Ali Badawi, the Ministry of Culture's regional director of archaeological sites, said, "The amount of debris and damage at the site is high […] Some archaeological artefacts were damaged when rubble fell on them, as debris fell over a large area, impacting a large number of elements at the site – columns, capitals, column bases, mosaics."

Tyre is also home to the Al-Bass archaeological site, which includes a necropolis (city of the dead), a Roman hippodrome (chariot-racing stadium), and the remains of an ancient aqueduct. Another airstrike on 26 May landed about 180 meters from the hippodrome.

CITADEL OF CHAMAA AND OTHER SITES

The medieval Citadel of Chamaa (also spelled Shamaa) was severely damaged by Israeli force explosives and bulldozers between April and May 2026. It has lost at least three of its four domes.

This citadel, built in the 11th century, is also located within the Tyre district. It houses a shrine dedicated to Shamoun al-Safa (Simon Peter, or Saint Peter, in English). Shamoun al-Safa was one of the original disciples of Jesus Christ, and his shrine is venerated by both Christians and Muslims.

According to Lebanon's Directorate General of Antiquities, 20 heritage sites were damaged during Israeli attacks carried out from September to November 2024. Of these, nine were entirely demolished.

The damaged sites included the Ottoman souq of Nabatieh, the Church of St George in Derdghaya, and the mosque and church of Yaroun.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

International humanitarian law is principled on the understanding that there are sacred sites, including cultural heritage sites, that must be protected from hostilities for the sake of those who care about them.

UNESCO's Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict could call a meeting to discuss appropriate sanctions in response to attacks on protected cultural property.

UNESCO should also announce a mission to assess the destruction in Lebanon (after securing immunity from attack).

Finally, the Lebanese government should prepare a submission to the World Heritage Committee to request technical and funding assistance for damage to the World Heritage site of Tyre, as well as to the International Criminal Court, for attacks on Lebanon's cultural property under Enhanced Protection.

—The Conversation

Beaufort Castle before being attacked; Israeli troops raise the Israeli flag (right) and the Golani flag, representing the 1982 capture, over the castle in May end –*X/ISRAELKATZ*

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Are FIFA hydration breaks all about money? Move sparks debate

Curaçao fans went wild. The Germans were in shock.

Livano Comenencia had scored a goal for the smallest nation by population to ever qualify for the World Cup against four-time champion Germany.

At 1-1 in Houston a famous upset looked possible.

Then came the hydration break. Curaçao lost the initiative, conceding two goals before halftime in what eventually became a 7-1 defeat to the Germans.

"I actually felt sorry for them," former England striker Alan Shearer told The Rest is Football podcast. "They scored and then it was maybe 30 seconds after that it stopped. So it's killed their momentum."

FIFA's new hydration breaks midway through each half — a novelty for this World Cup — were introduced to help players deal with the summer heat in the United States, Canada and Mexico. But critics say they're having unintended consequences, ruining the flow of the game and giving coaches a chance to tactically shift momentum in their team's favour.

While player welfare is a real concern with temperatures expected to exceed 90^ F (32^ C) in the hottest World Cup venues, some say the hydration breaks are just an excuse for broadcasters to go to commercials in the middle of the game.

"We're in America, right? So, it's like it is it's like it's a timeout," former Ireland international Roy Keane said on The Overlap, a podcast that he co-hosts with long-time Manchester United teammate Gary Neville. "We love football because of the pace of the game... what it's doing is stopping the flow of the game, the momentum."

A CHANCE FOR COACHES TO HUDDLE

Rather than players merely taking on fluids, coaches have been seizing the opportunity to pass on in-game tactical instructions that would normally not be possible. And early indications are that it is having an effect.

"You can use the break to tell the players what they need to improve or what is good or what they should do better," Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman said. "So you can use it in different ways to your advantage, and this is what we will be doing."

In eight of the first 16 games there were goals scored within 10 minutes of the rehydration break. Curaçao never recovered after the restart against Germany.

Morocco paid the price against Brazil in New Jersey, having dominated the game from the start and scored just before the first break. Less than 10 minutes after play resumed the game was level with Vinicius Junior equalizing.

Canada, the US, Australia, Scotland, Sweden and Iran have all benefited with goals soon after the break.

Momentum maps have shown how games have shifted after the new stoppages in play. The hydration breaks also affect the experience of fans watching the games at stadiums. There were boos from the crowd on the first hydration break in the game Tuesday between Iraq and Norway in Foxborough, Massachusetts.

BREAKS REGARDLESS OF THE WEATHER

Referees pause the games 22 minutes into each half, with players given three minutes to rehydrate.

FIFA stipulated that the breaks would occur regardless of the weather, venue or location, meaning the Spain vs. Cape Verde match in Atlanta on Monday was interrupted despite being under a roof and in an air conditioned stadium.

The governing body said it was to "ensure equal conditions for all teams, in all matches."

Spain coach Luis de la Fuente said the breaks make sense in "extreme" heat conditions but questioned whether they were necessary at every match.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE COMMERCIALS

Aside from the sporting impact on games, the stoppages have been criticised for damaging the spectacle for fans, with broadcasters using the opportunity to take commercial breaks.

In the United States, Fox immediately goes to commercials during the hydration breaks. Telemundo, a Spanish-language US broadcaster, does not.

Unlike in US professional sports like baseball, basketball and football, commercial breaks have not been a common feature in soccer except during the half-time break.

"Every time going to a commercial is a bit... not really (something) that I like," said Netherlands captain Virgil van Dijk, who watched World Cup games on TV before the Dutch began their campaign with a 2-2 draw against Japan. "I think for the neutral watchers on TV it's also not great."

France coach Didier Deschamps, however, said this is the changing face of soccer. "It's not two half times, it is four quarter times basically that we've got. This is what's been decided and so the players and the coaches adapt to this new reality," he said.

It is not known if FIFA will implement hydration breaks at all future World Cups, but the English Football Association said it was unlikely to be in place for the European Championship, hosted by the U.K. and Ireland in 2028. *—PTI*

Switzerland's Michel Aebischer squirts water onto his face as the players take a mandatory hydration break during World Cup match –*FIFA*

—ANI

Rajapaksa's son arrested on corruption charges

COLOMBO, 17 JUNE

Yoshitha Rajapaksa, son of former Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapaksa, was arrested on Wednesday by the Commission to Investigate Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC) over alleged irregularities in his recruitment and training in the Sri Lanka Navy. CIABOC said Yoshitha was appointed to the Navy's executive branch in 2006 without meeting required qualifications and was later sent for training at Britain's Royal Naval College using public funds outside established procedures. The arrest comes amid a wider anti-corruption drive by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's government. Yoshitha is already facing a separate money laundering case linked to a property purchase. Other Rajapaksa family members are also under investigation. *—PTI*

Brazilian court convicts ex-prez Bolsonaro's son

SAO PAULO, 17 JUNE

Brazil's Supreme Court convicted former lawmaker Eduardo Bolsonaro on Tuesday for coercion related to the trial that last year sentenced his father and ex-President Jair Bolsonaro to 27 years in prison for a coup attempt. The court sentenced him to four years and two months in prison. All five justices considering the case agreed he illegally interfered by lobbying the U.S. government to threaten Brazilian officials to stop the trial. Lawyers for Eduardo Bolsonaro disputed the verdict, saying there was not enough evidence to convict him. Eduardo Bolsonaro did not make comments about the Supreme Court's decision. He is campaigning for his brother Senator Flavio Bolsonaro, who is expected to challenge Lula in October's elections. *—PTI*

Taiwan blames China after Kenya deports its scholars

NAIROBI, 17 JUNE

Taiwan has accused Kenya of acting under Chinese pressure after several Taiwanese scholars travelling to attend a global oceans conference in Mombasa were detained and deported. Taiwan's foreign ministry said the delegates had their passports and mobile phones confiscated and were held for over 20 hours before being removed from the country. Taipei condemned the incident as a violation of human rights and international norms, alleging that Beijing pressured Kenya to block the scholars from participating in the event. Kenya rejected the accusation, saying its foreign policy recognises only "One China" and Taiwanese passports were not valid. *—PTI*

Putin hosts Russia-ASEAN summit

MOSCOW, 17 JUNE

Russia's President Vladimir Putin is hosting leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations at a summit that opens Wednesday, seeking to bolster business and other ties with members of the regional bloc. The two-day Russia-ASEAN summit, held in Kazan, will consider ways to expand Russia's "strategic partnership" with ASEAN that includes Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, East Timor and Vietnam. The regional bloc has maintained relations with Moscow as a "dialogue partner" and engaged Russian officials in annual top-level meetings. Putin said he was confident that it will "create new opportunities" for "mutually beneficial trade, investment, and industrial cooperation, while also strengthening direct dialogue." *—PTI*

US to set up $300B pvt fund to rebuild Iran under MoU

Trump threatens to 'start dropping bombs'

DUBAI, 17 JUNE

With details of the tentative Iran-US peace deal slowly emerging, officials said that Tehran will immediately reopen the Strait of Hormuz upon signing the memorandum of understanding, officials confirmed on Wednesday after leaked copies emerged.

The accord, due to be signed Friday in Switzerland, also envisions Iran receiving at least USD 300 billion from a private fund set up by the US to rebuild after the war. The US would also work to end all American and United Nations sanctions imposed on Tehran — if a final agreement addressing Iran's nuclear programme is reached.

Meanwhile, at the G7 summit in France, US President Donald Trump cast doubt on whether the signing would happen as planned. Asked how confident he was that the ceremony would take place, Trump said: "You never know with deals, do you? But you're going to find out pretty soon". He warned that the US could restart dropping bombs on Iran, "smack in the middle of their head... if they don't behave".

Notably, the deal opens a two-month period for US-Iran nuclear negotiations, even though Trump has sometimes justified the strikes as preventing Tehran from getting a nuclear weapon.

Much of the agreement would restore the status quo before the war, including ending hostilities, restarting negotiations between the US and Iran over Tehran's nuclear programme, and reopening the Strait, which is a crucial passage for the world's oil and natural gas and whose closure created a historic energy crisis.

The deal includes an end to the fighting in Lebanon between Israel and the Iranian-backed militia Hezbollah, a key demand made by Iran.

Some concessions to Iran — including the full lifting of sanctions and the release of frozen assets — would happen gradually and be linked to progress in the nuclear talks, according to officials from Pakistan.

But in the meantime, the US will issue waivers to sanctions that allow Iran to sell oil freely. *—PTI*

> **Let's say that they (UAE) want to invest in a nuclear power plant in Iran. They really can't do that without us lifting some of the sanctions... We're saying that if the Iranians change their behaviour, we're going to let some of these other countries invest in rebuilding their country** -JD Vance, US Vice President

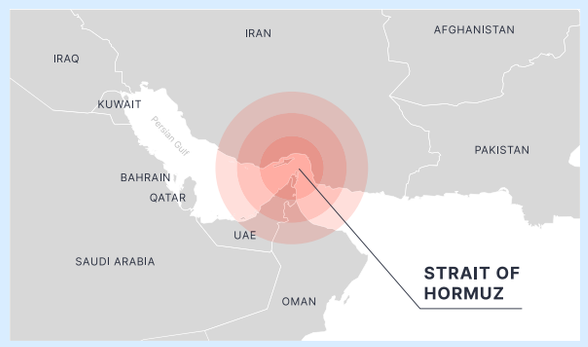
> **Considering the real situation in the relevant countries, China has decided to offer humanitarian aid to Iran and Lebanon ... to further assist the people in recovery and reconstruction, (and)improving their economy and livelihood**
>
> -Lin Jian, China's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson

> **We in the Gaza Strip are not part of this agreement. Where do we stand? We had a lot of hopes in these talks.... We were very hopeful that we would be part of the deal, but the world is not looking at us anymore**
>
> -Samir Ayad & Un Jamal Ayad, Palestinians to Al Jazeera

KEY POINTS OF THE DEAL

Here are the key points of the tentative Iran-US memorandum of understanding, according to verified leaks.

- US to set up **$300B** pvt fund to reconstruct Iran
- All US and UN sanctions on Iran to end if nuclear deal is reached
- Iran to sell oil freely
- End of war on all fronts, including Lebanon. No mention of Israeli withdrawal.
- US and Iran to respect sovereignty and not interfere in domestic affairs.
- 60 day negotiating window to reach final deal.
- Iran and US to end blockade on Strait of Hormuz. No mention of Iranian "fee system".
- Iran to demine the Strait of Hormuz.
- US to withdraw its forces from surrounding areas within 30 days after the final agreement.
- Iran "reiterates" it will never build a nuclear weapon. Final agreement to address Iran's enriched uranium.
- US to release an undisclosed amount of Iran's frozen assets.
- Final resolution will be approved through a binding resolution of the UNSC.



G7 calls for immediate ceasefire in Lebanon

EVIAN, 17 JUNE

On the final day of the summit, leaders of the G7 countries called for an immediate ceasefire in Lebanon.

"We support, through an immediate robust ceasefire, the Lebanese leadership's efforts to achieve the disarmament of Hezbollah and the monopoly of arms, and to protect Lebanon's territorial integrity and sovereignty with the appropriate international security guarantees," the joint statement said on Wednesday, as leaders continued meetings in the French town of Evian-les-Bains on Lake Geneva.

The statement comes even as Israel continued to bombard its neighbour. Israeli jets struck the Nabatieh al-Fawqa area and the outskirts of neighbouring Kfar Tebnit, in southern Lebanon, state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported. The Israeli military has not yet commented, but has previously said it is targeting the Iran-backed armed group Hezbollah.

A day earlier, US President Donald Trump had criticised Israel's approach to the war, saying that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is not able to disarm Hezbollah without "killing everyone".

"You don't have to knock down an apartment house every time you're looking for somebody, because there are a lot of people in those apartment houses, and they're not all Hezbollah," Trump said at the G7 summit. The G7 statement also condemned the violence in the West Bank as the countries pledged to accelerate "humanitarian and reconstruction efforts" in Gaza.

A billboard in the Dahiyeh, Beirut's southern suburbs shows late Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, with the message 'Thank you Iran' *—PTI*

> **We cannot stop destroying houses in southern Lebanon. Period. We cannot allow the population of southern Lebanon to return. ... We must continue to control the territory even if Trump disagrees. We are an independent state.**
>
> -Ben Gvir, Israeli National Security Minister

HORMUZ

The G7 leaders also pledged to diversify their energy supply routes "in order to reduce global vulnerability" as nearly a fifth of the world's oil once passed through the Strait of Hormuz before it was abruptly shut due to the US-Israel-Iran war. The countries also pledged to increase their energy stocks and indicated that Canada could contribute soon. *—Agencies*

Ukraine secures defence commitments from G7 allies

EVIAN, 17 JUNE

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Wednesday said his country secured significant commitments from G7 countries, including to further strengthen the country's air defence capabilities and increase pressure on Russia.

G7 leaders said in a joint statement that they would increase military support for Ukraine after recent "progress on the battlefield."

These include an increase the delivery of air defence systems, interceptors and long-range capabilities to Ukraine, while also considering measures to expand Ukraine's domestic military production through licensing arrangements

The declaration also committed additional support to strengthen Ukraine's energy resilience ahead of the winter and vowed to intensify pressure on Russia's "war economy" through sanctions, including measures targeting the oil and gas sectors.

"The G7 Summit in France delivered important results for Ukraine... There will be new steps to put pressure on Russia over its war - pressure for the sake of peace," Zelenskyy stated on X.He added that Ukraine's partners would continue supporting the country's defence requirements and energy infrastructure.

AI HUDDLE

In a rare huddle of AI industry figures, leaders of three of the most powerful AI companies -- OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, Google DeepMind CEO Demis Hassabis and Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei -- are due to attend a working lunch on the theme of "Ensuring a safe, rapid and effective deployment of artificial intelligence." Several smaller AI firms are also taking part.

This comes as countries across the world, including European nations, have expressed scepticism over American AI companies. *—Agencies*

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European Council President Antonio Costa at the G7 summit in France *—X @ZELENSKYYUA*

> **It is important that we share a common understanding of the main challenges and specific steps to address them. Our global unity is genuinely reducing Russia's ability to continue this insane and criminal aggression**
>
> -Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukrainian President

5 held for plotting attack during WH UFC fight

WASHINGTON, 17 JUNE

The FBI has arrested five people for allegedly plotting an attack on a UFC event held at the White House, involving explosives-laden drones and gunfire aimed at crowds fleeing the venue. According to court documents, investigators uncovered plans to fly drones carrying explosives over the event before opening fire on attendees.

Authorities recovered firearms, ammunition, maps, photographs and encrypted messages linked to the alleged conspiracy. The suspects, arrested in multiple states, face charges including conspiracy to commit murder.

Among those arrested was 19-year-old Tycen Proper of Ohio, whose family alerted police after he made antisemitic remarks and purchased weapons. Investigators said several suspects were linked through online groups promoting extremist views. The alleged plot was uncovered four days before the event. FBI Director Kash Patel said swift action by federal agencies prevented the planned attack. *—Agencies*

Clashes erupt at S Africa's deportation drive

WASHINGTON, 17 JUNE

Police fired rubber bullets and stun grenades at migrants protesting near a community hall in Durban, South Africa, where thousands are being processed for deportation. The clashes come amid rising tensions over immigration and growing anti-migrant sentiment in the country.

Most of those gathered are Malawians who arrived more than a week ago seeking voluntary repatriation on buses arranged by their government. However, delays prompted authorities to establish an immigration court at the site and begin what the Home Affairs Ministry called "formal deportation process-

es."

Television footage showed protesters hurling rocks, sticks and logs at police, who responded with crowd-control measures. Local media said frustrations over delays in returning home triggered the unrest.

The ministry said at least 1,876 people had been identified as being in South Africa without proper documentation and would be deported. Verification of others is continuing. Durban officials estimate that more than 6,000 Malawians could eventually face deportation.

KwaZulu-Natal Premier Thami Ntuli said nearly 10,000 Malawians have been camped near the venue awaiting transport. Malawi has already repatriated hundreds of its citizens, while Nigeria, Ghana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe have also assisted nationals wishing to leave South Africa.

The unrest comes as South Africa intensifies immigration enforcement. Authorities say more than 100,000 undocumented migrants have been deported over the past two years, while over 500,000 others were turned back at borders while attempting illegal entry. *—PTI*

100 DIED IN CAGES

Vietnam cops rescue 400 cats from being eaten

HANOI, 17 JUNE

Police in Vietnam seized more than 400 cats in a major bust of a cat meat crime ring in Ho Chi Minh City, according to animal welfare groups and local media reports.

Officers discovered 45 cages containing around 400 live cats and four ice-filled foam containers holding approximately 80 dead cats, with 21 live cats recovered at a separate location, according to The Ho Chi Minh City Criminal Police Division.

More than 40 of the rescued cats were reunited with their owners following the multiday operation last week, but around 100 have died due to the harsh conditions that they were kept in, the groups said.

At least 40 of the cats were reuinited with their owners *–x*

An investigation last week into a spate of pet thefts in Ho Chi Minh City led police to track down the cat meat crime ring and detain nine individuals, according to local media.

The suspects admitted to trapping and collecting cats across south Vietnam over the past three years, police said.

This operation is "a sobering reminder of the enormous scale of Vietnam's cat meat trade," Karanvir Kukreja, who leads a campaign against dog and cat meat consumption for the international nonprofit Humane World for Animals, said in a statement. *— PTI*

'Russian warship acted recklessly in Channel'

LONDON, 17 JUNE

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Wednesday accused the crew of a Russian warship of acting recklessly when they fired warning shots near a British yacht in the English Channel, though he downplayed the seriousness of the incident.

The owners of the 40-foot sailboat Bright Future say the shots were fired early Tuesday morning when they encountered a Russian warship while crossing the English Channel to Cherbourg in France. Russia says the crew of the frigate Admiral Grigorovich fired shots into the air after the sailboat failed to respond to warnings to change course.

No one was injured.

Speaking at the G7 summit in France, Starmer said the incident was "deeply concerning," even though British defence officials have concluded the shots weren't "anything more sinister" than an effort to avoid a collision. *—PTI*

Rupee rises 10P to close at 94.5 against USD

MUMBAI, 17 JUNE

The rupee appreciated 10 paise to close at 94.50. In the interbank foreign exchange market, it opened at 94.46 and traded in the range of 94.29-94.60. Eventually settling at 94.50. Forex traders noted that the rupee opened on a positive note as Brent crude fell below USD 79 per barrel and the US dollar index retreated from its elevated levels, with markets pricing in the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz following the US-Iran peace framework. Moreover, positive domestic equity markets further supported investor sentiment. On Tuesday, the rupee ended 2 paise lower at 94.60. In the past four trading sessions, the rupee has gained over 140 paise against the US dollar.—*PTI*

Unistone Capital settles insider trading Sebi case

NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

Merchant banker Unistone Capital and its director Jitendra Sanghavi have settled a case with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) over alleged violations of insider trading rules in the shares of Cupid Ltd after paying a combined settlement amount of over Rs 67 lakh. Sebi initiated adjudication proceedings against Unistone and Sanghavi for the alleged violations of Prohibition of Insider Trading (PIT) regulations, allegedly entered into contra trades in the shares of Cupid Ltd, with the buy and sell legs executed within a period of six months. They were also accused of carrying out trades in the company's scrip during the investigation period without obtaining the required pre-clearance, the regulator said in an order passed on Tuesday. —*PTI*

Telegram blames Reliance for ban

'Reliance, WhatsApp behind govt move'

NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

Telegram CEO Pavel Durov has alleged that Reliance Group may have lobbied with WhatsApp to push for the app to be banned –*PTI*

Telegram CEO Pavel Durov on Wednesday alleged that Reliance tried to ban the messaging app in India and disrupted its internet access abroad, a day after the Indian government blocked the platform until 22 June over NEET paper leak concerns.

In a post on X, Durov alleged that Indian telecom operator Reliance was "sabotaging access" to Telegram for millions of users outside India, including in the United Arab Emirates, through a technique known as Border Gateway Protocol (BGP) hijacking.

"The sabotage seems intentional, as Reliance has ignored multiple reports," Durov said, in reference to Telegram having identified BGP hijacking and sent multiple notices to the telecom operator to resolve the issue.

"This may be part of a competitive war, as Reliance is partially owned by Meta, the company behind WhatsApp," Durov further claimed.

However, a senior telecom industry source said Durov appeared to have confused two separate entities — Reliance Communications and Reliance Industries' telecom arm Jio. Sources say he misidentified the company responsible, as the autonomous system number (AS18101) cited in Durov's post belongs to Reliance Communications.

Notably, Reliance Communications is a separate entity from Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), whose digital unit Jio received a minority investment from Meta in 2020. "Meta is only a minority investor in Jio and has no role in its day-to-day operations or management. Conflating the two demonstrates either a lack of understanding of the sector or a deliberate attempt to spread misinformation," the source said.

Telegram, Reliance Communications, Jio, Meta and WhatsApp did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Durov criticised the IT ministry. "This punishes 150M+ ordinary Telegram users in India — not the insiders who leaked the exam materials," he said. "And the ban hasn't stopped anything.

The leaks just moved to other apps."

He added that over the past few weeks, Telegram has removed hundreds of channels sharing leaked exam materials. —*PTI*

Jio set to file for IPO in 4 days: Report

At $4B, this will be India's biggest listing

NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

Mark Zuckerberg posing with billionaire industrialist Mukesh Ambani's son Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant at their pre-wedding bash in Jamnagar, India on Saturday $5.7 billion investment –*RIL*

Reliance Jio Infocomm could file draft papers for its much-anticipated USD 4 billion initial public offering within days, just ahead of billionaire Mukesh Ambani's closely watched annual address to Reliance Industries shareholders on Friday, the Financial Times reported on Wednesday.

If launched at the proposed size, the listing would be India's largest IPO, surpassing Hyundai Motor India's USD 3.3 billion issue and be the biggest public offerings.

The timing of the filing comes as Indian markets have softened amid geopolitical tensions amid US–Israel war with Iran, which has impacted India's energy costs. The market slowdown has also delayed other major listings, including Walmart-backed PhonePe. Indian equities have meanwhile underperformed while Taiwan and South Korea markets, have rallied on global demand for AI-related components. Reliance Industries' shares have fallen around 15 per cent in 2026, while the company reported a 13 per cent decline in net profit for the March quarter, partly due to weakness in its refining business.

Investor attention is expected to remain fixed on Jio and Reliance's stock performance in the coming days as speculation builds around the IPO filing.

Meta Platforms, a key strategic investor in Jio Platforms, holds a 9.99 per cent stake acquired for Rs 43,574 crore ($5.7 billion) in 2020. According to reports, Reliance has opted for a predominantly fresh issue structure after discussions with existing investors on valuation, shifting from earlier expectations of partial stake dilution by global investors such as Meta, Google and KKR through an offer-for-sale component.

Under the revised plan, IPO proceeds would flow directly to Jio for expansion rather than providing exits to existing shareholders, a move aimed at avoiding stretched valuation expectations while supporting long-term value creation after listing.

Investment banks, including Jefferies, estimate Jio Platforms' post-IPO valuation could range between USD133 billion and USD 180 billion, significantly enhancing the value of early backers' stakes. —*Agencies*

A FIRST FOR NOIDA

The first cargo flight at the Noida International Airport (NIA), a Boeing 737-800F operated by Afcom Holdings between Chennai and Noida, was welcomed with a water cannon salute at the airport's cargo hub. The airport began freight operations on Wednesday, two days after starting commercial passenger flights on 15 June. AISATS Multi Modal Cargo Hub (MMCH) at NIA handled the domestic freighter flight, with the aircraft carrying nearly 20 tonnes of mixed cargo, including perishables, consolidation shipments, auto components and mobile devices. –*PTI*

'India's oil reserves cover just 10 days of imports'

NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

India's current strategic petroleum reserves are equivalent to just about 9-10 days of the country's net crude imports, far below other major import-dependent countries, a new report revealed on Wednesday.

The report, 'How Secure is India's Energy Future? Assessing Accessibility, Reliability, and Affordability,' by Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), also noted that over 85 per cent of India's crude oil imports come from just six countries, limiting flexibility supply shocks.

For gas, India imports nearly half its supply as LNG but has no dedicated strategic gas storage facilities, leaving fertiliser plants and city gas networks exposed, the report said.

It also highlighted that the country's coal security risks are increasingly influenced by its continued dependence on imported coking coal – particularly from Australia – for steelmaking, and exposure to Indonesian export policies for non-coking coal imports.

On the domestic side, declining coal quality and rising production costs signal a narrowing cost advantage for coal power over firm renewable power, said the report.

It argued that clean energy can reduce India's exposure to continuously imported fossil fuels.

However, the report said that clean energy can create a different kind of strategic dependence: on critical minerals, technologies, and industrial inputs.

This dependence must be managed through domestic manufacturing, supply-chain diversification, recycling, and strategic international partnerships, according to the report. —*PTI*

RBI infuses Rs 72,300 cr into banking system

MUMBAI, 17 JUNE

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday infused Rs 72,300 crore transient liquidity through two Variable Rate Repo (VRR) auction into the banking system after surplus liquidity narrowed following advance tax payments.

Variable rate repo auctions are used by the RBI to manage liquidity mismatches in the banking system.

The central bank injected Rs 50,016 crore through a two-day VRR auction at a cut-off rate of 5.26 per cent. It also infused another Rs 22,284 crore via a second two-day VRR auction. Currently, liquidity in the banking system is estimated to be in surplus of around Rs 23,881.21 crore as on 16 June.

"Considering the narrowing of surplus liquidity in the banking system and expectation of further outflows on account of goods and services tax payment, the central bank may conduct more variable rate repo auctions to support liquidity and keep overnight rates under check," said V Ramachandra Reddy, head of treasury at The Karur Vysya Bank.

In the last few days, overnight rates have been trading above the RBI's repo rate due to strain on the liquidity surplus, prompting the central bank's intervention to infuse transient liquidity in the banking system.

On Wednesday, weighted average call money rates were trading at 5.37 per cent, which was 0.12 per cent higher than the repo rate, and Treps was trading at 5.21 per cent. —*PTI*

FOUR-DAY WINNING STREAK

Easing oil prices fuel market rally

MUMBAI, 17 JUNE

Sensex and Nifty ended higher on Wednesday, taking their winning run to the fourth straight session, amid softening crude oil prices following the he US-Iran peace deal .

BSE Sensex climbed 347.14 points (+0.45 per cent) to settle at 77,155.62. During the day, it jumped 410.51 points (+0.53 per cent) to 77,218.99.

NSE Nifty rallied 96.55 points (+0.40 per cent) to end at 24,085.70. Intraday, the benchmark advanced 119.05 points (+0.49 per cent) to 24,108.20.

"Weakness in crude oil prices, driven by easing tensions around the Strait of Hormuz, kept investor sentiment buoyant," said researcher at Geojit Investments, Vinod Nair.

On Wednesday, Brent crude traded at USD 79.10 per barrel.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, Tata's Trent jumped the highest with 7.06 per cent. Bharat Electronics, Eternal, Tata Steel, Infosys, Titan and Bharti Airtel also gained.

Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the laggards.

On Tuesday, Sensex jumped 544.15 points to 76,808.48. Nifty climbed 135.25 points to end at 23,989.15. —*PTI*

Vedanta Power eyes hydro, nuclear energy for future

NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

Newly listed Vedanta Power on Wednesday said it is evaluating a foray into hydro, battery storage, and nuclear energy for long-term diversification.

The company said it recognises nuclear energy as a clean, reliable power source and a key enabler of the country's energy transition.

Vedanta has listed its shares on the BSE and the National Stock Exchange (NSE).

The other newly demerged businesses—aluminium, oil and gas, and iron and steel—also commenced trading on the exchanges alongside Vedanta Power.

The company plans to scale its capacity to 20 GW, to be among the top-three private-sector power companies in the country.

As part of this journey, Vedanta Power expects to commission the second 600 MW unit at its Sakti plant in the second half of FY27 and increase total capacity to 12 GW by FY33. —*PTI*

'El Nino persisting through 2027 will raise inflation risk'

NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

Amid global crop yields face uncertainty due to rising fertiliser prices amid the ongoing West Asia conflict, the likelihood of El Nino persisting through 2027 has increased, posing risks to inflation in highly rated sovereign economies, says Fitch Ratings.

El Nino brings unusually dry conditions in some regions and heavier-than-normal rain.

As per Fitch, environmental conditions hampering the agricultural or economic activity could weaken the credit profiles of lower-rated sovereigns, specifically "those in the 'B' category."

Meanwhile, some regions could benefit from changing weather, particularly areas where increased rainfall supports agricultural output.

If severe enough to slow growth, raise inflation, strain public finances, or deplete reserves, El Nino could affect sovereign ratings in vulnerable countries. —*ANI*

CENTRAL BANKS PIVOT TO BULLION: SURVEY

NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

Central banks around the world are doubling down on gold, with a record number of institutions planning to expand their bullion holdings over the next year.

According to the World Gold Council's (WGC) 2026 Central Bank Gold Reserves Survey, 89 per cent of respondents say global central gold reserves will rise.

"A record 45 per cent of respondents expect their own gold reserves will also increase" over the coming year. Only 1 per cent expect their institution's gold reserves to decline.

Central banks have an average of 1,000 tonnes of gold annually over four years, higher than the average.

Gold's role in periods of crisis remains one of the strongest factors driving central bank demand.

According to the findings, 74 per cent of respondents expect US dollar holdings within global reserves to be moderately or significantly lower over the next five years, while gold's share is expected to increase.

The survey, withresponses from 76 central banks, recorded the highest participation level since its inception nine years ago. —*ANI*

NRI CO-FOUNDER AMAN SANGER

SpaceX to acquire AI startup Cursor for $60B

NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

Cursor cofounders Sualeh Asif, Arvid Lunnemark, Aman Sanger, Micheal Truell are all in their 20s now, having made the app at MIT –*MIT*

Elon Musk's SpaceX has officially signed an agreement to acquire Anysphere, the company behind the popular AI coding assistant Cursor. The transaction values Cursor at an implied equity value of USD 60 billion, marking it as one of the largest private tech acquisitions of 2026.

According to a SpaceX regulatory filing on 16 June, the tech giant will absorb the startup through its subsidiary, X67 Inc, though Cursor will continue to operate as a wholly-owned subsidiary.

At closing, each share of Cursor's common and preferred stock will convert into SpaceX Class A common stock, using an exchange ratio based on SpaceX's volume-weighted average closing price over the seven trading days prior to closing. The merger is expected to close in the third quarter of 2026.

Born to Indian immigrant parents, Aman Sanger cofounded Cursor, with—Michael Truell, Sualeh Asif, Arvid Lunnemark— while at MIT in 2022.

The deal will turn Cursor's three co-founders into billionaires.

According to a Forbes estimate, they will be worth USD 2.7 billion each when the deal goes into effect.

Anysphere, the company behind AI coding assistant Cursor, is a San Francisco-based software firm that develops tools and models allowing users to edit code, search codebases, run commands, and complete programming tasks using natural-language instructions.

Today, Cursor is a staple in the software development industry, used by millions of engineers across 50,000 major enterprises, including Nvidia, Adobe, Uber, Shopify, and PayPal —*Agencies*

Wipro launches AI Centre in Bengaluru for Anthropic

NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

Bengaluru-based IT services major Wipro on Tuesday inaugurated an Applied AI Centre of Excellence (CoE) focused on Anthropic's Claude models to accelerate AI adoption at Wipro's Bengaluru innovation hub.

The CoE will also serve as a hub for developing AI-native platforms and industry-specific solutions across sectors such as mortgage, healthcare, airlines, manufacturing, and consumer goods.

Wipro also said it is embedding Claude models into its own platforms to scale AI adoption across internal finance, human resources, and sales functions.

Over the next 18 months, the company plans to certify 10,000 front-line delivery experts on Claude models, integrating Claude capabilities across the Wipro Intelligence stack and embedding AI into core business workflows, Wipro said in a regulatory filing.

Wipro added that it has been building a global talent pool of Forward Deployed Engineers (FDEs) trained on Claude models. "These engineers operate.., with hands-on model expertise," it said. —*PTI*

IPO-bound Tryfacta bags healthcare staffing contract

NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

US-based workforce and technology solutions provider Tryfacta Inc on Wednesday said it has secured a healthcare staffing contract from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the United States.

Under the award, Tryfacta will recruit, qualified clinical and allied health professionals across disciplinesLast week, the company filed draft papers for a proposed USD 100-150 million IPO on the exchanges at GIFT City.

Upon listing, Tryfacta is expected to become the first US-headquartered firm to list its equity shares in India through the GIFT City framework. —*PTI*

MESSI has his first World Cup hat trick

Defending champion Argentina beats Algeria 3-0 in opener

KANSAS CITY, 17 JUNE

Lionel Messi registered his first World Cup hat trick while moving into a tie for first on the tournament's career scoring list, sending defending champion Argentina to a dominant 3-0 victory over Algeria in its group-stage opener.

Messi scored his first goal in the opening minutes on Tuesday night on a nice feed from Inter Miami teammate Rodrigo De Paul, the second on a rebound early in the second half. Shortly after he got his third on a strike from the top of the penalty box, he subbed out to a standing ovation from a heavily pro-Argentina crowd.

The trio of goals gave him 16 for his career, putting him in a tie with Germany's Miroslav Klose for the career record. They also allowed him to join Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo as the only players to have scored in five World Cups.

"The first matches at the World Cup are always tough," Messi said after playing in the tournament for a record-setting sixth time, "and we're seeing that nobody's giving anything away."

Well, almost nothing. Algeria made some crucial mistakes on the first two of Messi's goals, which came 20 years to the day that he made his World Cup debut for Argentina in a match against Serbia and Montenegro — he scored in that one, too.

"We're not talking about any old footballer," Algeria coach Vladimir Petkovic said. "Unfortunately we also offered him the opportunity with the first and second goal, and we actually made it easier for him. But Messi, with his clear thinking in crucial stages of the game, is able to do things that much more easily."

Messi's brilliant hat trick helped Argentina get off to a much better start than its last World Cup. Four years ago, La Albiceleste were beaten by Saudi Arabia in their opening match in Qatar, only to rally from there to win their third world title.

Messi, who turns 39 next week, nearly had two other goals against Algeria, never once looking like the mild hamstring injury that worried fans in the run-up to the tournament was a problem. One found the back of the net but was called back because he was ever-so-slightly offside, and another strike in the second half just cleared the crossbar.

Argentina will continue its pursuit of back-to-back titles in Arlington, Texas, when it plays Austria on Monday and Jordan on June 27. Algeria plays Jordan on Monday in Santa Clara, California, before facing Austria in its Group J finale on June 27 in Kansas City. *—PTI*

KYLIAN MBAPPÉ BY THE NUMBERS:

Star striker starts his World Cup by breaking France scoring record

Kylian Mbappé broke the France scoring record with two goals against Senegal at the World Cup on Tuesday.

The 27-year-old Real Madrid striker reached 58 goals, during a 3-1 victory for France, to move one ahead of Olivier Giroud, who has retired from the national team.

He will look to add to his tally when his country faces Iraq in Philadelphia on Monday.

It concludes Group I action against Norway in Boston four days later.

MBAPPÉ'S FIRST GOAL FOR LES BLEUS CAME NINE YEARS AGO. HERE'S A LOOK AT SOME OTHER STATISTICS DURING HIS FRANCE CAREER

14: Number of goals Mbappé has scored in World Cups. Two at this tournament; eight in 2022, where he earned the Golden Boot trophy as top scorer; and four in 2018. He has moved past countryman Just Fontaine's tally of 13 — all scored at the 1958 World Cup. Former Germany striker Miroslav Klose and Argentina's Lionel Messi — who scored a brilliant hat trick just hours after Mbappé's brace — share the record of 16 World Cup goals.

3: Mbappé's hat tricks for France. His first was a four-goal haul playing alongside Karim Benzema in a World Cup qualifier against Kazakhstan in 2021. His next came against Argentina in the 2022 World Cup final, and the other during a record 14-0 rout of Gibraltar in a European Championship qualifier in 2023.

18: Mbappé's age when he made his France debut as a substitute away to Luxembourg in a World Cup qualifier in March 2017. Still 18, he scored his first goal in a qualifier against the Netherlands at Stade de France in August that year.

7: Most amount of consecutive matches with at least one goal for France, from early June last year to late March this year.

10: The amount of times Mbappé has been shown a yellow card for France. He has not been sent off.

2: Number of World Cup finals scored in: against Croatia in 2018, aged 19, and against Argentina in 2022. He is one of two men to grab a hat trick in a World Cup final, with the other being England's Geoff Hurst in 1966. The other Frenchman to score in two finals is Zinedine Zidane (1998 and 2006) while the only other teenager to score in a men's final was Brazil great Pelé in 1958.

99: Number of matches for France. He could overtake coach and former captain Didier Deschamps (103 appearances as a midfielder) if France goes deep at this tournament. Barring injury Mbappé should go on to overtake goalkeeper Hugo Lloris' record of 145 appearances for Les Bleus. *—PTI*

Haaland makes WC debut with 2 goals against Iraq

FOXBOROUGH, 17 JUNE

Erling Haaland scored his first two World Cup goals, including one off a defensive blunder, and added an assist in his tournament debut on Tuesday to propel Norway to a 4-1 victory over Iraq in Group I.

It was the 56th and 57th international goals for the Manchester City striker and came in Norway's first appearance in the tournament since reaching the round of 16 at the 1998 World Cup in France — two years before Haaland was born. This was Haaland's first senior World Cup match.

Leo Ostigard added the third goal in the 76th minute off a corner kick from Martin Odegaard. Kristian Thorstvedt scored the final goal just before the final whistle off Haaland's assist.

Iraq briefly equalised just nine minutes after Haaland's first strike on a goal by Aymen Hussein.

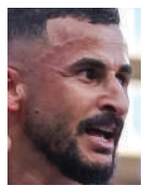
But Haaland put the Norwegians in front for good just before halftime when he snuck in front of a poor back pass to Iraq goalkeeper Jalal Hassan. Haaland beat him to the ball, preempting his attempted clearance, and then used his shin to put the ball in the back of the net.

Haaland's first goal, which came in the 29th minute, came off a cross into the box from David Moller Wolfe. Haaland slid and used his right heel to finish it off. It ignited waves of cheers from the Norway supporters, who dominated the stands clad in red as they broke out in synchronized Viking row chants.

Iraq, playing in the World Cup for just the second time after debuting in 1986, held its own with a sizeable contingent of supporters that was mostly concentrated behind one of the goals. *—PTI*

Detained by US custom, Aymen Hussein scores for Iraq

FOXBOROUGH, 17 JUNE



Iraq striker Aymen Hussein was delayed on the way to his first World Cup. He still made the best of his tournament debut.

It wasn't clear if Hussein would compete after he and another member were detained for hours coming through US customs in Chicago.s

Two weeks later, Hussein scored the second World Cup goal in his country's history during Iraq's 4-1 loss to Norway on Tuesday. Hussein also had a late own-goal, but Iraq coach Graham Arnold took only positives out of his star's effort.

"I'd rather remember his performance and the way he's played," Arnold said. "He's had quite a few injures during the season. For him to get through 90 minutes. ... He's the type of player that's very difficult to control in the box. I'm very proud of him." *—PTI*

Ronaldo looks to make history by scoring in 6th World Cup

NEW YORK, 17 JUNE

Cristiano Ronaldo, your turn.

The 41-year-old is set to enter the World Cup on Wednesday when Portugal meets Congo after impressive performances by the tournament's other top stars.

France's Kylian Mbappé and Erling Haaland of Norway each had two goals as they opened their World Cup campaigns on Tuesday, while Lionel Messi scored a hat trick for Argentina. That gave Messi 16 career goals in the World Cup, tying him with Germany's Miroslav Klose for the all-time record.

Ronaldo is also looking to make history by becoming the first player to score in six World Cups. Messi, too, is playing in his sixth World Cup but failed to find the net in 2010.

"Well, I wish him the best — I hope that he scores but not against us," Congo coach Sébastien Desabre said of the Portugal forward.

"We go match by match, but not with the expectations of winning it all," Ronaldo told reporters in Portugal last week before the team's departure. "It has to be step by step. A good start is the most important thing," he said. *—PTI*

Snake chills at Germany camp

NEW YORK, 17 JUNE

Tactics and opponents are not the only concerns for German footballers in the ongoing FIFA World Cup. They are also worried about what might be "hiding in the grass" after spotting a snake at their base camp in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Germany captain Joshua Kimmich opened about the slithering problem and the BBC reported that similar complaints have come from the Swiss and Norwegian teams too.

"In Germany, you worry about tactics, injuries, and your next opponent. Here, you also have to think about what might be hiding in the grass," Kimmich said.

Kimmich and his teammates encountered a copperhead, which is a venomous snake commonly found in North Carolina.

Kimmich said the moment his team found out that the snake was venomous, it triggered concerns.

"We saw a snake yesterday, we were told it was venomous. If you get bitten, you have to go to the hospital. I don't think you'll die, but it's certainly dangerous. I have the feeling that if you step on a snake like that, it can end badly," he said. *—PTI*

NEYMAR RETURNS TO ACTION FOR LIMITED TRAINING WITH BRAZIL

MORRISTOWN, 17 JUNE

Neymar was back on the training field, returning to action for the first time since he joined Brazil's World Cup squad while nursing an injured right leg.

Neymar still wasn't at full speed, though, and did mostly physical conditioning at the team's training camp outside New York.

He had undergone tests on his right calf on Monday to determine the progress of the injury that he sustained while playing with Brazilian club Santos on 17 May.

The 34-year-old Neymar, playing at his fourth World Cup, has yet to join the rest of the squad in full training sessions during the team's preparations.

He is not expected to play in Brazil's match against Haiti on Friday in Philadelphia. The five-time World Cup champions began their tournament with a 1-1 draw against Morocco on Saturday in Group C. *—PTI*

India A crush Afghanistan A by 101 runs in tri-series

DAMBULLA, 17 JUNE

A compelling all-round performance helped India A thrash Afghanistan A by 101 runs here on Wednesday, bolstering their chances of making the tri-series final.

After amassing 319 for nine riding on fifties by skipper Tilak Varma, Priyansh Arya and Kumar Kushagra, India A bowlers produced a unified show to bundle out Afghanistan A for mere 218 in 36.5 overs.

Nishant Sindhu was the pick of the bowlers as he returned 4/31 from his 6.5 overs, while pacer Yash Thakur claimed 2/48 from his seven overs. Anshul Kamboj, Vipraj Nigam, Suryansh Shedge, and Anukul Roy claimed one wicket apiece.

For Afghanistan, Bahir Shah (57 off 52 balls; 4 fours, 1 six) and Faisal Shinozada (46) provided some resistance but most of their batters failed to convert their starts.

The victory gave India A two crucial points to take their tally

Prince Yadav celebrates after taking the catch of Afghanistan's Ibrahim Zadran during an ODI cricket match in Lucknow on Wednesday *—PTI*

to four, and helped them make it to the summit clash after losing each of their last two games.

The Indians did not have to wait long for the second wicket, as No. 3 Khalid Taniwal fell to Kamboj for 13 in the sixth over and skipper Imran Mir's wicket came Sidhu's way in the 10th over.

Shinozada and Bahir added 87 for the fourth wicket to stabilise the innings for Afghanistan, but they were both dismissed in quick succession which derailed their chase completely. India were quick off the blocks with Vaibhav Sooryavanshi (38, 28b) and Arya adding 75 runs for the opening wicket in just eight overs. Sooryavanshi once again promised a lot, striking some trademark shots through covers and a couple of sixes. *—PTI*

Lanka stuns NZ in Women's T20 World Cup

SOUTHAMPTON, 17 JUNE

Sri Lanka crippled New Zealand's title defense at the Women's Twenty20 World Cup with a final-over comeback victory in Southampton.

Sri Lanka beat New Zealand for the first time in a World Cup after Nilakshika Silva and Kaushini Nuthyangana combined for an unbeaten 48 runs off 28 balls to reach the 151 target with two balls and five wickets remaining at the Rose Bowl.

New Zealand has lost its first two group matches. Only one team in tournament history has advanced to the semifinals with two defeats — South Africa at home in 2023. "New Zealand is one of the best teams and the world champions, and the tournament favorites," Athapaththu said. *—PTI*

95-RUN VICTORY

Shafali & Mandhana headline India's win over Netherlands

LEEDS, 17 JUNE

Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma sizzled with the bat as India coasted to an emphatic 95-run win over the Netherlands in their Women's T20 World Cup match here on Wednesday.

The Indian opening duo of Mandhana (74 off 47 balls) and Shafali (55 off 38 balls) slayed a hapless Netherlands attack to fire India to 209/5, their highest total in the tournament history.

The Netherlands were never in the run chase despite promising knocks from skipper Babette de Leede (28 off 27 balls) and Sterre Kallis (18 off 13 balls) before being bundled out for 114 in 17.3 overs.

On her World Cup debut, pacer Nandani Sharma had a productive outing. She had opener Heather Siegers caught at cover for a memorable first wicket in her first ICC game.

Deepti Sharma, star with the ball against Pakistan, stuck in her first over having Phebe Molkenboer caught at mid-off.

The wily Shree Charani was too good for the opposition's middle and lower-order and was also on a hat-trick in the 17th over. She was all over Netherlands after trapping Robine Rijke in her third over.

Earlier, it was a second successive fifty-plus score for Mandhana while Shafali completed her maiden tournament half-century.

The Netherlands bowlers were wayward and Shafali made them pay. Her aerial drive over extra cover off pacer Isabel Woning stood out in the first six overs.

Mandhana got into her element post the powerplay, stepping out to spinners and pacers alike. The star Indian opener collected four boundaries off as many balls in the 15th over bowled by Silver Siegers.

However, India were able to record their highest total in World Cup history after timely cameos from Rich Ghosh (20 off 8 balls) and Deepti Sharma (10 off 2 balls). *—PTI*

Smriti Mandhana bats during the Women's T20 World Cup match against the Netherlands in Leeds, England, on Wednesday *—PTI*